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*Evaluation of the CGIAR Research Program  
“Forests, Trees and Agroforestry” (FTA)  
Volume I – Evaluation Report*

*Submitted by:  
Independent Evaluation Arrangement*



# **Evaluation of the CGIAR Research Program “Forests, Trees and Agroforestry” (FTA)**

*Volume I – Evaluation Report*

*July 2014*



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## Glossary and Acronyms

A4NH	Agriculture for Nutrition and Health.
AAAS	American Association for the Advancement of Science.
AdaptEA	Adaptation of people to climate change in East Africa.
AfDB	African Development Bank.
AFOLU	Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use.
APFORGEN	Asia Pacific Forest Genetic Resources Programme.
AR4D	Agricultural Research for Development.
BIODEV	Building Biocarbon and Rural Development in West Africa.
BOT	Board of Trustees.
CAGR	Cumulated Average Growth Rate.
CATIE	Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza.
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity.
CCAFS	Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security.
CCT	Component Coordination Team.
CEO	Chief Executive Officer.
CGIAR	The name CGIAR comes from the acronym for the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. In 2008, CGIAR underwent a major transformation. The name and acronym CGIAR is retained for continuity.
CIAT	International Center for Tropical Agriculture.
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research.
CIMMYT	Centro Internacional de Mejoramiento de Maiz y Trigo.
CIRAD	Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement.
Cluster of Activities	Key sub-segments of CRPs under guidance for the second CRP call. Several Clusters of Activity constitute a Flagship Project. Clusters of Activity are sub-projects (in general 5 to 8). The term is not used in backward-looking parts of this evaluation as the concept hadn't been introduced.
CPA	Consortium Performance Agreement.
CPF	Collaborative Partnership on Forests.
COBAM	Climate Change and Forests in the Congo Basin.
COMIFAC	Commission des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale.
Component	One of FTA's five principal program segments. Used alternating with "Theme" and "Flagship" in FTA documentation. The Inception Report consistently uses the term "Component" in order to avoid confusion ("Theme" describes components as well as sub-



	components and “Flagship Projects” are slightly different because of a more pronounced intended focus on a few outcomes).
Consortium	The legal entity “Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers.”
Component Coordinator	Person in charge of leading and coordinating a FTA Component across FTA Participant Institutions.
Component Focal Point	Person assisting a Component Coordinator within a FTA Participant Institution.
Coordinator of a Cross-cutting activity	Person in charge of leading and coordinating a cross-cutting activity across FTA Participant Institutions.
Cross-cutting activity	Umbrella term used in this report for various themes and support activities not constraint to a single FTA Component. Also termed “cross-cutting themes” and “program support” in FTA documentation. Cross-cutting activities vary in the degree to which they receive central program support and to which they are intended to be incorporated into work along program components.
CRP	CGIAR Research Program. The central programmatic modality for results-based research in the reformed CGIAR.
CRP6	CGIAR Research Program 6: Forests, Trees and Agroforestry. Referred to as “FTA” throughout this report.
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation.
CSO	Civil Society Organization.
CTFS	Center for Tropical Forest Science.
DDG	Deputy Director General.
DFID	UK Department for International Development.
DG	Director General.
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo.
EBA	Ecosystem Based Adaptation.
EC	European Commission.
EFI	European Forest Institute.
EPMR	External Program and Management Review.
EU-FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Facility of the European Union.
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
FC	Fund Council of the CGIAR.
Flagship Project	Also called “Flagships.” Key segments of CRPs under guidance for the second CRP call. Each FP has specific objectives and may produce several outputs and research outcomes in order to achieve in due course two or three Intermediate Development Outcomes or IDOs

	(rarely more). The term is not used in backward-looking parts of this evaluation as the concept hadn't been introduced.
FLEGT	(European) Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade.
FLEGT-VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreements in the context of FLEGT.
FP	Flagship Project.
FRIM	Forest Research Institute Malaysia.
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council.
FTA	CGIAR Research Program 6: Forests, Trees and Agroforestry: Livelihoods, Landscape, and Governance. In FTA documentation, FTA is also referred to as "CRP-FTA", "CRP6-FTA", "CRP6". Throughout this report "FTA" is chosen for convenience.
FTA Center	CGIAR Center represented on the FTA Steering Committee.
FTA Director	Person in charge of leading and coordinating FTA as a program. Also referred to as "Head of MSU" and "Program Coordinator" in FTA documentation.
FTA Evaluation Team	The 6 people team implementing this evaluation on behalf of the IEA.
FTA Participant Institutions	FTA Centers and other, non-CGIAR institutions that are part of the FTA Steering Committee.
GACF	Global Alliance of Community Forestry.
GCS-REDD+	Global Comparative Study in REDD+.
GEF	Global Environment Facility.
GHG	Greenhouse Gas.
GPFLR	Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration.
HR	Human Resources.
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank.
ICRAF	World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF refers to the original name of the center, International Council for Research in Agroforestry).
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women.
IDH	The Sustainable Trade Initiative.
IDO	Intermediate Development Outcome.
IEA	CGIAR Independent Evaluation Arrangement.



IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute.
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development.
IITA	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture.
INPE	Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais.
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
IPGs	International Public Goods.
IPGRI	International Plant Genetic Resources Research Institute, former name of “Bioversity International”.
IRD	L'Institut de Recherche pour le Développement.
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute.
ISI	Institute for Scientific Information.
ISPC	Independent Science and Partnership Council of the CGIAR.
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature.
IUFRO	World's Network of Forest Science.
LAFORGEN	Latin American Forest Genetic Resources Network.
Lead Center	CGIAR Center with overall legal and fiduciary responsibility for FTA. From program inception onwards, CIFOR has fulfilled this role.
LTER	Long Term Ecological Research.
LUC	Land-use Changes.
LUWES	Land Uses of Lower Carbon Emissions.
MAPFORGEN	Mapping Forest Genetic Resources.
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals.
MEIA	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Impact Assessment. MEIA is also the name of a team working on these topics within FTA.
MSU	Management Support Unit.
NAMAs	Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions.
NARES	National Agricultural Research and Extension Systems.
NARS	National Agricultural Research Systems.
NGO	Non-governmental Organization.

NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration.
NLBI	Non-legally Binding Instrument on all types of forests by UNFF.
NTFP	Non-timber Forest Products.
OCS	One Corporate System.
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
OECD-DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee.
PES	Payments for Environmental Services.
PIA	Program Implementation Agreement.
PoWB	Plan of Work and Budget.
PPA	Program Participant Agreement.
PRGA	Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis
PROFOR	Program on Forests.
PROFORMAL	Policy and regulatory options to recognize and better integrate the domestic timber sector in tropical countries.
RD	CIFOR Research Domain.
REALU	Reducing Emissions for All Land Uses.
RBM	Result-based Management.
RECOFTC	Center for People and Forests.
RRI	Rights and Resource Initiative.
RRC	Rural Resource Centers.
RSPO	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil.
SAFORGEN	Sub-Saharan African Forest Genetic Resources.
SC	FTA Steering Committee. The central governance body of FTA, operating on delegated authority from the Lead Center BOT.
SD	ICRAF Science Domain.
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals.
SEI	Stockholm Environment Institute.
SL	Sentinel Landscape.
SLO	System Level Outcome.

SMART	Acronym for: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises.
SOs	Strategic Objectives.
SPs	Sample Projects.
SRF	CGIAR Strategy and Results Framework.
SSAC	Scientific and Stakeholder Advisory Committee.
Sub-component	One of several sub-segments within FTA's principal program components. Used alternating with "Theme", "Sub-Theme", and "Cluster of Activities" in FTA documentation. This report consistently uses the term "sub-component" in order to avoid confusion ("Theme" describes components as well as sub-components and "Clusters of Activities" are slightly different because of a clearer intended focus on few outcomes).
TFD	The Forests Dialogue.
Theme	Used to describe a topic or a thematic area. FTA documentation uses the term "theme" also to refer to program segments: for the 5 components, but also for sub-components. This report consistently uses the term "Component" for these segments in order to avoid confusion.
ToR	Terms of Reference.
UN	United Nations.
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme.
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
UNFF	United Nation Forum on Forests.
UN-REDD	United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries.
UN-REDD+/REDD+	"REDD+" goes beyond deforestation and forest degradation. It includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.
USA	United States of America.
USAID	United States Agency for International Development.
USD	United States Dollar.

VCS	Verified Carbon Standard.
VECEA	Vegetation and Climate change in Eastern Africa.
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement.
WB	World Bank.
WFF	World Future Foundation.
WRI	World Resources Institute.
WWF	World Wildlife Fund.

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Foremost, the Evaluation Team thanks the FTA Director, the FTA Coordination Unit, the FTA Component Coordinators, coordinators of cross-cutting activities and focal points for their continued availability for interviews and for thoughtful contributions. The team also wishes to thank the DGs, DDGs, senior scientific and administrative Center staff, and interviewed Board members of all four FTA Participant Institutions (CIFOR, ICRAF, Bioversity International and CIAT) for making themselves available for extended interviews and discussions. Key staff from FTA's two non-CGIAR Participant Institutions made themselves repeatedly available and added their valuable perspectives to this evaluation's body of knowledge for which the Evaluation Team wishes to thank them sincerely. The Evaluation Team also wishes to thank CIFOR, ICRAF and Bioversity International Center staff on all levels – from drivers to senior managers – for facilitating and helping to organize Center and field visits effectively and efficiently.

The team also thanks the CGIAR CEO and several staff members from the CGIAR Consortium Office for effective and candid interactions and for hosting the Evaluation Team at their offices in Montpellier for two days, and the Fund Council Executive Secretary and Head of Fund Office for extended interactions.

Many scientists involved in FTA have been interviewed by Evaluation Team members and an extraordinary 72 percent (225) have reacted to an online survey request. The Evaluation Team wishes to genuinely thank these people for investing their already scarce time into providing information important to this evaluation. The team also thanks more than 140 boundary partners that have provided their input into another online survey, as well as a large number of people who were interviewed beyond the CGIAR.

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## Executive Summary

The principal purpose of this evaluation is to enhance the contribution that the CGIAR Research Program on Forests, Trees and Agroforestry (FTA) is likely to make to reaching CGIAR goals and to solving evolving global, regional and national forestry and agroforestry-related challenges. The evaluation covers the period from program start in July 2011 to end of 2013, with the main inquiry phase taking place from October 2013 to February 2014. The evaluation has a strong formative, forward-looking component that analyzes FTA's likelihood for generating future outcomes and impacts. Empirical evidence was gathered through interviews, surveys, field visits, document review and database analysis, and was triangulated and verified in support of the conclusions presented.

FTA is led by CIFOR in and includes three additional CGIAR Centers (ICRAF, Bioversity International, and CIAT) as well as two non-CGIAR Participant Institutions (CIRAD and CATIE). It is a ten-year multi-partner program to be implemented within the Consortium's Strategic Results Framework (SRF) and along the rules and regulations of the reformed CGIAR. The first phase of FTA covers the period from July 2011 through June 2014 with an initial USD 233 million three-year budget that includes a USD 90 million contribution from the CGIAR's programmatic funding windows 1 and 2.

FTA aims at enhancing the management and use of forests, agroforestry and tree genetic resources across the landscape, from forests to farms and plantations and strives to become the leading global comparative research initiative focused on forestry, agroforestry and tree diversity across the developing world. The research activities are organized along five principal program components:

1. Smallholder production systems and markets;
2. Management and conservation of forest and tree resources;
3. Landscape management for environmental services, biodiversity conservation and livelihoods;
4. Climate change adaptation and mitigation; and
5. Impacts of trade and investment on forests and people.

**Relevance.** The Evaluation Team finds that FTA's overall objectives are highly relevant, especially from the global public goods perspective. There is strong demand for a program like FTA and for the research carried out by FTA Participant Institutions. Research that can address the inter-related research questions around forests, trees and agroforestry requires a holistic, integrated approach and a broad range of expertise that goes beyond what any single FTA Participant can provide in isolation. Geographically, FTA works largely in relevant areas, with research focusing on biodiversity hotspots, areas under deforestation and degradation threats and with ongoing deforestation and degradation, and also on the most impoverished regions of the world.

The evaluation found that FTA's objectives and its research agenda are aligned with the SRF vision, relevant Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and draft Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as with objectives of related global agreements and programs. FTA objectives also clearly cater to the overall objectives the CGIAR has set itself, the common Intermediary Development Outcomes (IDOs) and the CGIAR systems' four System-Level Outcomes (SLOs). Although FTA objectives and research agenda are in line with the main trends in the sector, there are some gaps or



weaker areas in addressing the key challenges and opportunities as understood by “the global forestry community” and reflected in the various forest-related agreements, negotiation processes and international initiatives.

Based on the review of the entire FTA project portfolio, some core areas of sustainable forest management dealing with resource assessment, silvicultural methods, harvesting and planted forest development, do not appear to receive adequate attention. This is an issue because there is demand also for this type of research and an opportunity for FTA to step in.

FTA is strong in addressing directly forest-related challenges but weaker in dealing with extra-sectoral issues related, for example, to energy, private sector, agriculture, and water as well as land tenure, and in identifying action and mechanisms for addressing cross-sectoral issues.

In relation to the emerging set of SDGs, its likely forest-related targets, and recent international initiatives including the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20, the FTA research portfolio does not yet truly incorporate ideas from the emerging “green economy” orientation. The Evaluation Team also highlights the need for FTA to address economic factors such as employment and income at a scale beyond livelihoods improvements giving emphasis on pathways for sustainable growth.

**Summary Recommendation 1: FTA’s program and component-level objectives continue to be pursued programmatically because of their high global relevance. Several adjustments must be made to address emerging research themes, ensure better integration of forestry issues into the broader development agendas, and better balance current research priorities geographically.**

**Component structure and thematic focus.** FTA’s component structure (see above) is found to be straightforward and reasonably logical. It mirrors the Lead Center’s research domains and blends in well with ICRAFs science domain matrix structure, and therefore minimizes interface issues. The boundaries of Component 2 with respect to sustainable forest management and biodiversity are somewhat blurred towards Components 1 and 3. Across components, tenure is of central importance and deserves additional highlighting. Based on the analysis of the component research portfolio, a number of adjustments for component coverage are recommended that are further detail in this report.

**Summary Recommendation 2: The Evaluation Team recommends to better balance research priorities thematically, to adjust component coverage accordingly, and to establish “tenure” as a cross-cutting activity.**

**Comparative advantage.** FTA Centers are seen as global leaders in key scientific domains of FTA research. The most important comparative advantage applying to all the FTA Centers is that they are regarded as neutral world-class scientific research organizations that do not aim to push specific agenda.

ICRAF is perceived as a world leader in agroforestry in general, and on research for rural development; while CIFOR is renowned for its policy-oriented research, early work on forest governance, and promoting the role of forests and trees in food security and livelihood

improvement. CIFOR is also regarded as center of excellence in communication and international dissemination of research findings. Bioversity International has a strong global reputation for conservation of forest genetic resources. CIAT has only been marginally involved in FTA to date, but may complement FTA's landscape approach with its crop and pasture expertise, play an important bridging role as CCAFS' Lead Center with related climate change expertise, and provide on-the-ground expertise and presence in Latin America in the future. FTA offers an umbrella under which important additional cooperative growth potential can be realized.

**Summary Recommendation 3: All FTA Participant Institutions safeguard their principal comparative advantage of being neutral, world class research institutions, and resist pressures to work outside their areas of comparative advantage. CIFOR and ICRAF must further intensify their already close collaboration to maximize synergies and minimize unnecessary competition.**

**Quality of science.** FTA is led by a group of accomplished senior scientists. Researchers involved in FTA are on average enthusiastic, committed, productive and highly qualified. FTA-related research has led to more than 1400 publications in 2011-2013, half of which are journal articles of which 80 percent appeared in ISI-listed journals. A good balance is kept between peer-reviewed journal articles and other publications, with access to critical target audiences in mind. Working conditions for FTA scientists are satisfactory to good and adequate *ex-ante* and *ex-post* quality assurance processes are in place.

Surveyed boundary partners expressed very high levels of satisfaction with various aspects related to the quality of scientific work done in the past by FTA Participant Institutions. Interviewees from organizations of strategic importance for FTA agreed on overall good scientific quality of FTA outputs but sometimes questioned their relevance and applicability.

**Effectiveness.** For individual projects, FTA has demonstrated overall good performance with respect to achieving planned outputs and research projects have been implemented diligently. While projects have usually delivered (or are likely to deliver) outcomes that are in their direct control, performance in terms of delivering outcomes at scale are less satisfactory.

Along entire program components, reported performance in reaching output-level targets defined in FTA's results framework is mixed: on average, 80 percent of output targets were fully reached, with strong fluctuations between components. Some of the performance in reaching output targets is related to reporting rather than performance issues (see below). On the level of component outcomes, FTA does not systematically track performance. Nevertheless, two important conclusions can be drawn across components.

First, driven to a large degree by bilateral project funding, the overall FTA research portfolio does not yet demonstrate strong synergies between projects, and shows inadequate collective alignment towards FTA objectives. Instead, a large part of the FTA research portfolio consists of individual and often unrelated projects. New project proposals are frequently not integrated into FTA's results framework.

Second, increasing the likelihood for FTA research to contribute to large scale development outcomes remains a challenge:

- Along impact pathways aiming at adoption of technologies, information or germplasm, the Evaluation Team could often not identify a convincing rationale for how pilot-scale achievements would drive further up or out-scaling, and there is too much reliance on the assumption that well-documented and widely disseminated case studies or research results would, by themselves, become effective drivers of replication, adoption, and further applied research;
- Along pathways aiming to influence national and international policy, the Evaluation Team is concerned about the feedback received from international and regional institutions of strategic importance for FTA. In most cases, FTA was not known as a program at all and, more importantly, the degree to which these institutions valued, had used or had otherwise been influenced by earlier outputs from FTA Centers, was moderate. Several interviewees from these institutions felt that they had better sources of scientific insight.

Overall, FTA needs to further strengthen its outreach to, and inclusion of, project boundary partners and, especially, to large development organizations towards ensuring relevance and update of FTA research.

With limited options and capacity to drive adoption, the degree to which favorable conditions for adoption and application are already in place must be added as a factor in choosing research locations and topics. Research products must also be designed based on their usability, as perceived by those who are expected to use them. In addition, FTA needs to considerably strengthen the management of its research portfolio. Greater attention needs to be applied when mapping projects to FTA as to their fit with the program, and Window 1 and 2 funds must be used exclusively for FTA purposes, including for co-financing bilateral grants if a value-adding argument exists.

**Summary Recommendation 4: FTA further develops its results framework and impact pathways into a comprehensive theory of change, and a framework for results-based management that explicitly acknowledges windows for opportunistic and blue-sky research. Based on this framework, FTA must then initiate active management of its entire research portfolio, including increased selectivity with regard to mapping bilaterally funded projects to the program.**

Recommendation 4 also provides the mechanism for focusing FTA research activities. Earlier recommendations (recommendations 1 and 2) have increased, rather than reduced, the areas FTA research is recommended to cover. The introduction of early-outcome targets (recommendation 4) now allows concentrating research around a suitable number of those targets in order to keep the overall research activity volume in line with capacities and funding.

**Sentinel Landscapes.** The Sentinel Landscapes concept has high relevance and holds great promise to produce much-needed, comparable long-term datasets of socioeconomic and biophysical changes along the forest transition curve. FTA has chosen and established data protocols for nine Sentinel Landscapes, seven covering specific geographies and two specific topics.

Currently, the integration of Sentinel Landscapes with other research appears challenging. Project teams and donors operating within Sentinel Landscapes have not been easy to convince to adhere to data collection protocols defined by the FTA Sentinel Landscape Team. For successful

implementation, it is also critical to ensure the involvement of partners as key actors that should be part of these decisions, and more scientific leadership to motivate researchers across FTA is needed.

The Evaluation Team is particularly concerned that the needed support for Sentinel Landscapes on the donor side has not yet materialized. Unrestricted FTA funds dedicated to Sentinel Landscapes are insufficient to guarantee ongoing tracking of even a core set of indicators over many years. By their very definition, the ecoregional public goods produced by this type of research only materialize if uninterrupted long term data collection under the same protocol is guaranteed, which requires sufficient and uninterrupted funding.

**Summary Recommendation 5: As part of the preparations for FTA's second phase proposal, the Evaluation Team recommends that the FTA Steering Committee re-assesses the relevance and the financial sustainability of the current set of Sentinel Landscapes, and adapt the entire approach to Sentinel Landscapes in the FTA Phase II Proposal accordingly.**

**Gender.** At pre-proposal stage, FTA received positive feedback on how Gender was incorporated. However, the FTA research portfolio to-date exhibits incomplete Gender coverage. Only 45 percent of the project proposals that were reviewed integrated Gender aspects, with no visible trend for improvement over time.

FTA's 2013 Gender strategy proposes clear objectives and impact pathways, explains the corresponding approaches, identifies Gender-relevant scientific questions for each FTA component and defines initial indicators for monitoring progress and success. The strategy is also in line with the CGIAR Gender strategy. The strategy does not sufficiently cover social diversity, and does not provide advice on how to assess and deal with limited scalability of approaches to Gender. It must also incorporate more lessons learned from the "Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis" (PRGA).

**Summary Recommendation 6: Updating the FTA Gender strategy to better cover social diversity, scalability of findings, and earlier lessons learned. The FTA Steering Committee must monitor the degree to which gender-sensitive research is mainstreamed in FTA and take corrective action if Gender mainstreaming remains stagnant by year-end 2015**

**Partnerships.** FTA itself recognizes the importance of connecting the program firmly to its boundary partners and to place the entire program and its components into the larger and complex network of processes and actors involved in development issues around forests, trees and agroforestry and into the context of other relevant research.

Existing project-level partnerships and partnership networks established by some country and regional offices of FTA Participant Institutions seemed well-justified and generally value-adding. However, partnerships with national organizations require strengthening both from the perspective of capacity building and for developing more effective impact pathways. To-date, FTA remains little known in the wider development arena, especially *vis-à-vis* a number of relevant global and regional players, and to its bilateral project donors.

**Summary Recommendation 7: FTA increases and makes more systematic its efforts to reach out to and involve partners on all levels: program donors, relevant actors of strategic importance for FTA, and boundary partners. FTA must further increase its efforts to include boundary partners into research priority setting, design, and implementation, develop their capacity, and ensure that FTA results targets respond to concrete needs of development partners.**

**Financial management.** FTA has shown considerable spending performance in view of sometimes uncertain and delayed disbursements of Window 1 and 2 program funds. However, more long-term predictability and reliability of funding is required to increase FTA's planning horizon. Timelier disbursements are needed to avoid future cash flow problems of FTA Participant Institutions. A reason for concern is the continued practice by many bilateral donors of issuing grants that exhibit significantly insufficient cost recovery. Currently, both the lack of long-term reliability and the diversion of significant Window 1 and 2 FTA resources to co-finance bilateral grants limit FTA's ability to fund key areas of high relevance for which bilateral funds are hard to raise, such as Sentinel Landscapes.

**Summary Recommendation 8: Fund Council and the Consortium Office improve the predictability, reliability and timely disbursement of Window 1 & 2 resources to FTA and urge CGIAR members to provide full cost recovery when acting as bilateral donors.**

**Data management and reporting.** The Evaluation Team has identified several challenges related to data management across FTA Centers. Procedures at ICRAF are found to represent good practice. Overall coding reliability of research mapped to FTA is not yet satisfactory, and the Evaluation Team would have assigned about a quarter of all FTA projects reviewed to a different component. Some projects are also fragmented across many CRPs and components, rendering straightforward management towards CRP objectives difficult. In addition, country information is not systematically tracked across program activities.

**Summary Recommendation 9: Recommends that the quality and coherence of FTA data management be improved.**

FTA's annual reporting to the Consortium Office and Board is based on detailed output-level "traffic light" reports and extensive narratives along pre-defined Consortium templates. FTA's progress reporting, while detailed, diligent and transparent, has remained incomplete, as only output-level achievements are systematically tracked and reported. The Evaluation Team has not been able to verify any reduction of reporting requirements to bilateral donors. At the same time, significant reporting requirements towards the Consortium Board and Office have emerged. It is hoped that in future years increased donor alignment will lead to the intended reduction of the overall reporting burden.

**FTA governance.** A series of institutions and bodies have contributed to FTA governance. FTA's Lead Center during the first phase, CIFOR, has performed well as fiduciary and legal agent and its Board of Trustees (BOT) and its DGs have shown a remarkable degree of careful attention to not leverage this role unduly. The Evaluation Team finds that this hands-off approach was appropriate.

The FTA Steering Committee was established following the Strategic Results Framework (SRF) guidance and provided effective and professional leadership during FTA's inception phase and the first years of operation. It has made commendable efforts towards the inclusion of new FTA Participant Institutions and the establishment of a competitive holdback fund for collaborative research.

However, an issue of particular concern is the apparently limited ability of the Steering Committee to establish strategic priorities for research under FTA, and to allocate fund accordingly across FTA Participant Institutions. Overall, the mandate of the Steering Committee should be considerably strengthened and explicitly include responsibilities for strategic priority setting and resource allocation. Going forward, a significant share of independent voice should be established in the Steering Committee to allow for efficient decision-making on issues for which other members have legitimate but vested and conflicting interests. At the same time, the significant commitments FTA Participant Institutions made and are expected to make regarding work funded directly by bilateral donors needs to be recognized and reflected in continued participation of those institutions in the Steering Committee.

The Consortium Board and Office, and all Boards of FTA Participant Institutions also play important roles in FTA governance. However, there is no comprehensive and shared understanding of how all key governance functions are divided among these bodies. In addition, there seems to be an unnecessarily formal and distant modus operandi between the Consortium Office on the one side and the Steering Committee and the FTA Participant Institutions on the other side, which effectively reduces governance efficiency.

**Summary Recommendation 10: Recommends strengthening and clarifying the mandate and the independent voice of the FTA Steering Committee, and to connect it better to the Consortium Board and Office.**

**FTA management.** The FTA Director and the FTA leadership group have shown strong commitment and worked hard to make FTA a success. Overall, however, the Director's mandate is too weak and the FTA leadership group duties' are insufficiently integrated into their home Center job descriptions. This stands in the way of translating a strengthened future mandate of the FTA Steering Committee into results on the ground

**Summary Recommendation 11: Recommends that the Director's mandate and independence, and FTA's overall line management reporting be strengthened..**

**Performance-based resource allocation on the level of the CGIAR.** On the level of the CGIAR system, the Consortium Board and Office have driven the development of a system for performance-based allocation of resources that is intended to be applied to FTA for its second phase, starting in 2017. The Evaluation Team is concerned about the lack of realism in those plans and finds that key issues remain unresolved such as i) difficulties of attributing research activities to development outcomes, ii) the available resources, time and methodology for monitoring results, iii) the lack of reliable methodology to compare the value for money across very different types of results, and iv) the considerable time-lags between activities and results.



Without fundamental adjustments, it seems unlikely that a workable and useful resource allocation system will be in place by 2017. In addition, in contrast to some narrow definitions of RBM, resource allocation cannot be solely based on past performance in reaching results, but should be based on rational decision making involving expert advice, analysis of the likelihood for uptake and use of scientific outputs of specific lines of research, comparative advantages of institutions involved and available funding, in addition to past performance in reaching attributable results.

The considerable expertise of FTA's Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Assessment (MEIA) Team should be leveraged more than in the past for this work and for aligning the ensuing system and FTA's own results framework (recommendation 4) with each other.

**FTA added value to date and the way forward.** Structurally, FTA has been set up and has operated largely as planned. FTA researchers overwhelmingly felt that positive net benefit had been created. The Evaluation Team is rather more skeptical and feels that FTA's return on investment, while potentially significant, has not yet materialized.

Observed changes attributable to FTA are a strengthened culture of collaboration between FTA Participant Institutions and an increased focus on outcomes. Disadvantages are mostly reflected in the opportunity cost associated with several senior CGIAR personnel and staff devoting considerable time to participating in the general reform process, in setting up and operating FTA, and in satisfying FTA-related reporting and planning requirements.

A central issue of concern of overriding importance is the poor state of affairs when it comes to the degree of trust between the FTA Participant Institutions and the Consortium Board and Office.

The Evaluation Team finds that a trust-based relationship between FTA Centers, their partners, and the Consortium Office and Board are necessary ingredients of critical importance for the future success of FTA. Going forward, FTA is therefore in need of a period of stable operations during which confidence in the value-add of the CGIAR reform and the reliability and functionality of the reformed system can be built, and the recommendations of this report can be implemented. To the Evaluation Team it has become evident that – especially in the current funding situation – the realization of a results-driven programmatic approach for FTA critically hinges on cooperation and collaboration between the Consortium Board and Office on the one hand, and FTA Participant Institutions on the other. A step change of direction towards better and more collaboration is required, without which success in establishing any of the above key requirements seems unlikely.

**Summary Recommendation 12: The Evaluation Team recommends that the Fund Council, the Consortium Board and Office, the FTA Lead Center and FTA Participating Institutions work together to ensure a multi-year period of stable operations during which confidence and trust is built, the recommendations of this report are implemented, and important requirements for FTA's future success are put in place.**

## List of Recommendations

This list provides only the main text of the recommendations. For additional details see the recommendation boxes in the conclusions and recommendation sections throughout the report.

1. The Evaluation Team recommends that FTA's program and component-level objectives continue to be pursued programmatically because of their high global relevance. Several adjustments must be made to address emerging research themes, ensure better integration of forestry issues into the broader development agendas, and better balance current research priorities geographically.
2. The Evaluation Team recommends to better balance research priorities thematically, to adjust component coverage accordingly, and to establish "tenure" as a cross-cutting activity.
3. The Evaluation Team recommends that all FTA Participant Institutions safeguard their principal comparative advantage of being neutral, world class research institutions and resist pressures to work outside their areas of comparative advantage. CIFOR and ICRAF must further intensify their already close collaboration to maximize synergies and minimize unnecessary competition.
4. The Evaluation Team recommends that FTA further develops its results framework and impact pathways into a comprehensive theory of change and a framework for results-based management that explicitly acknowledges windows for opportunistic and blue-sky research. Based on this framework, FTA must then initiate active management of its entire research portfolio, including increased selectivity with regard to mapping bilaterally funded projects to the program.
5. The Evaluation Team recommends that as part of the preparations for FTA's second phase proposal, the FTA Steering Committee re-assesses the relevance and the financial sustainability of the current set of Sentinel Landscapes and adapt the entire approach to Sentinel Landscapes in the FTA Phase II Proposal accordingly.
6. The Evaluation Team recommends updating the FTA Gender strategy to better cover social diversity, scalability of findings, and earlier lessons learned. The FTA Steering Committee must monitor the degree to which gender-sensitive research is mainstreamed in FTA and take corrective action if Gender mainstreaming remains stagnant by year-end 2015.

7. The Evaluation Team recommends that FTA increases and makes more systematic its efforts to reach out to and involve partners on all levels: program donors, relevant actors of strategic importance for FTA, and boundary partners. FTA must further increase its efforts to include boundary partners into research priority setting, design, and implementation, develop their capacity, and ensure that FTA results targets respond to concrete needs of development partners.
8. The Evaluation Team recommends that the Fund Council and the Consortium Office improve the predictability, reliability and timely disbursement of Window 1 and 2 resources to FTA and urge CGIAR members to provide full cost recovery when acting as bilateral donors.
9. The Evaluation Team recommends that the quality and coherence of FTA data management be improved.
10. The Evaluation Team recommends strengthening and clarifying the mandate and the independent voice of the FTA Steering Committee, and to connect it better to the Consortium Board and Office.
11. The Evaluation Team recommends that the Director's mandate and independence, and FTA's overall line management reporting be strengthened.
12. The Evaluation Team recommends that the Fund Council, the Consortium Board and Office, the FTA Lead Center and FTA Participating Institutions work together to ensure a multi-year period of stable operations during which confidence and trust is built, the recommendations of this report are implemented, and important requirements for FTA's future success are put in place.

# 1. Introduction to the Evaluation

This report represents the results of the first evaluation of the CGIAR Research Program “Forests, Trees and Agroforestry: Livelihoods, Landscapes and Governance.” The full program name will be abbreviated as “FTA” throughout this report for convenience. In this opening chapter, the evaluation is introduced.

## 1.1. Purpose and Audience

The principal purpose of this evaluation is to enhance the contribution that the CGIAR Research Program on Forests, Trees and Agroforestry (FTA) is likely to make to reaching CGIAR goals and to solving evolving global, regional and national forestry and agroforestry-related challenges.

Having its start date set on 01 July 2011 (CGIAR, 2011a, p. 3), the Fund Council-approved three-year first phase of FTA comes to an end on 30 June 2014. After this first phase, the currently available future guidance provided by the Consortium Office (Consortium Office, 2013) provides for an interim phase, starting on 01 July 2014 and ending on 31 December 2016, that is followed by a synchronized phase II for all CRPs, beginning on 01 January 2017<sup>1</sup>. The extension of FTA throughout the interim phase is based on a half-year extension for the remainder of 2014 (July-December), and yearly extensions for 2015 and 2016, all of which are negotiated with the CGIAR Consortium Board and Office.

This evaluation is intended to inform both the interim period until 2017 as well as the second phase of FTA from 2017 onwards.

The principal audiences of this evaluation are the governance bodies and the management of FTA and its Participant Institutions<sup>2</sup>, the CGIAR Consortium and Office, and the CGIAR Fund Council. The CGIAR Fund Council will be the ultimate recipient of this evaluation and its management response. Further audiences are FTA stakeholders external to the CGIAR. These consist of research partner organizations, national and international upstream

<sup>1</sup> Phase II of FTA will be based on a 2-step proposal development and vetting process that is planned to be conducted throughout 2015 and 2016.

<sup>2</sup> In detail these are: the FTA Steering Committee, the FTA Director and the FTA Management Support Unit, FTA Component Coordinators, Component Focal Points, and Coordinators of cross-cutting activities, the Boards of Trustees and the Director Generals of CIFOR, ICRAF, Bioversity International, CIAT, the CIRAD Board of Trustees and senior management, and CATIEs governing bodies and senior management.

boundary partners, whose decisions and policies are to be informed by FTA research, and downstream boundary partners, i.e. the intended intermediary users of FTA outputs.

A secondary purpose of the evaluation is to help the CGIAR Consortium Board and Office and the CGIAR Fund Council in building a body of experience on the suitability of structures, and governance and management arrangements of CGIAR Research Programs. Finally, the evaluation is also intended to provide the CGIAR Independent Evaluation Arrangement (IEA) with implementation experience of this first CRP evaluation in view of future CRP evaluations.

## 1.2. Evaluation Questions

This evaluation is organized around six principal evaluation questions (Independent Evaluation Arrangement, 2013, p. 38):

1. How coherent and relevant are FTA objectives?
2. What is the comparative advantage of FTA?
3. Is FTA research of high quality?
4. Is FTA likely to deliver its intended results?
5. Are FTA cross-cutting activities relevant and effective?
6. Are FTA institutional arrangements effective and efficient?

These six evaluation questions categorize 89 specific preliminary evaluation questions suggested in the Terms of Reference for this evaluation and cover their content apart from exceptions noted in Section 1.6. Both the Inception Report and the Terms of Reference of this evaluation can be downloaded on the IEA website (<http://iea.cgiar.org>).

All questions are intended both summative and formative in nature, i.e. they examine the past to draw insights and recommendations for the future. In addition, question 4 – and to some extent also question 5 – assess the likelihood of future results on the basis of currently available information as described in more detail in section 6.4.

It is understood that answering these evaluation questions requires a thorough understanding of the CGIAR-internal and external context, including the recent reform of the CGIAR.

The evaluation questions are presented in more detail below:

1. **How coherent and relevant are FTA objectives?** This entails the assessment of logical coherence of program- and component-level objectives and impact pathways, the degree to which project-level objectives fit into program- and component-level

objectives, and the evolution of this fits with the onset of FTA. Relevance is then assessed from the supply side, by analyzing how well FTA's research objectives answer to key global, regional, national and land-scape level forestry and agro-forestry challenges and opportunities, and how FTA objectives and impact pathways match with CGIAR system-level policies, for example how FTA and system-level Intermediate Development Outcomes (IDOs) relate to each other. From the demand side, relevance is assessed by how well FTA objectives and impact pathways respond to the needs of intermediary users and ultimate beneficiaries of FTA products. Finally, the overall coverage of research objectives, as well as the segmentation of FTA research into components, is critically examined for gaps and overlaps.

2. **What is the comparative advantage of FTA?** This covers horizontal relevance, i.e. to what extent FTA capitalizes on the comparative advantages of its participating centers and key partners, and whether the choice of participating centers and partners maximizes overall comparative advantage. This also covers vertical relevance, i.e. whether FTA as a program – as well as its constituting centers and partners – operate at the right levels in the landscape of global, regional, national and subnational programs, and within the right segments of the program's impact pathways to make fullest use of their relative strengths. Finally, this question also assesses the relevance of design, i.e. to what degree the current component structure and the institutional arrangements of FTA are conducive to strengthening its comparative advantage.
3. **Is FTA research of high quality?** This covers quality of science in a narrow sense as well as in a wider sense. In a narrow sense, quality of science is assessed by examining whether conditions for high quality scientific output are present, i.e. whether scientific staff is sufficiently qualified, enabled and motivated, and whether technical and other resources and support are adequate. The quality of scientific outputs and of scientific *ex-ante* and *ex-post* peer review and other quality assurance procedures are examined. In a wider sense, quality of science is understood as one necessary step towards program effectiveness and assesses the degree to which research is designed and prioritized according to its potential for future impacts consistent with CGIAR and FTA objectives, including providing incentives and a space for innovation and learning from failure. In the narrow sense, the assessment of scientific quality focuses on FTA Center staff. It should be noted that FTA outputs are



not restricted to published research as, for example, the case for germplasm and applied technology.

4. **Is FTA likely to deliver its intended results?** This question assesses both progress to date as well as likely future results and covers both research started under FTA as well as research already underway when FTA became operational. Progress to date is analyzed by comparing spending, project implementation, project outputs and outcomes to operational and strategic targets. The assessment of likely future results builds on the progress to date and the assessment of scientific quality (question 3) and examines the conditions for future outputs, outcomes, and impacts along project and component-level impact pathways.
5. **Are FTA cross-cutting activities relevant and effective?** Each cross-cutting activity is assessed on the program level as well as on a component and project level. On the component and project level, the degree to which cross-cutting objectives and activities are integrated into projects and components is examined. On the program level, central additional activities (if existent) not mainstreamed into components are assessed. Overall, the effectiveness of cross-cutting activities is analyzed against objectives for these activities. The following crosscutting and support activities are covered with emphases as indicated<sup>3</sup>:
  - a. **Sentinel Landscapes:** contributions to FTA and other research, international public goods produced, and (financial) sustainability.
  - b. **Gender:** FTA gender strategy, degree of mainstreaming and implementation status.
  - c. **Capacity Development:** FTA capacity development strategy, degree of mainstreaming and implementation status.
  - d. **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Impact Assessment:** harmonization and coverage of project- and program-level M&E, relevance and usefulness of results frameworks and related indicators, contributions of impact assessments to project, component and program objectives.
  - e. **Partnerships:** FTA partnership strategy, inclusiveness and coverage of required partners, relevance and effectiveness of current partnerships.

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<sup>3</sup> In-depth analysis on the project level is restricted to 3-5 sample projects per component.

- f. **Communication:** FTA communication strategy, relevance and contribution to delivering FTA outputs and outcomes, targeting of boundary partners and intended users.
6. **Are FTA institutional arrangements effective and efficient?** This covers the question of organizational effectiveness and whether FTA-induced transaction costs appear to be justified by gains in program performance and organizational effectiveness, for example by realizing collaborative synergies among participating centers or by enabling FTA centers and partners to – collectively – address priority research areas more effectively than before. This question covers the following areas with emphases as indicated:
  - a. **governance and management arrangements:** coverage, gaps and overlaps in standard governance and management functions, governance and management efficiency, incentives for reaching FTA objectives in the most efficient way;
  - b. **administrative procedures:** administrative efficiency, staff time requirements, advantages and disadvantages of using center versus potential program-owned (or potentially emerging CGIAR-level) systems and procedures; and
  - c. **financial management:** budgeting and management of FTA financial resources, management of Window 1 and 2 versus bilateral funding, financial flexibility and sustainability of FTA.

### 1.3. Scope

This evaluation covers program planning, all FTA research activities, and related governance and management processes from program inception in early 2011 to year-end 2013.

FTA research is understood to comprise of:

- “new” FTA research, i.e. FTA research projects planned and started after FTA became operational around July 2011; and
- “transferred” FTA research, i.e. FTA research projects planned and started before but ended after FTA became operational (or still being active).

Therefore, for transferred research projects, the period under investigation extends also to before mid-2011. For transferred research, the fact that FTA became operational gradually over time, rather than at a specific point in time is explicitly acknowledged.

FTA activities covered by this evaluation are funded in two principal ways:

- by FTA programmatic resources from Windows 1 and 2 of the CGIAR Fund; and
- by bilateral project donors, effectively bypassing the Window 1 and 2 programmatic channels.

Bilaterally funded projects introduce some uncertainty with regard to the boundaries of FTA. Since FTA is held responsible by the Consortium Board and Office only for the overall financial volume and the results associated with the entire FTA portfolio, individual projects can be moved, in principle, in and out of FTA at the FTA Participating Centers' discretion, as long as overall portfolio-level commitments are maintained.

## 1.4. Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation methodology is described in detail in the Inception Report of this evaluation that can be downloaded from IEA's website (<http://iea.cgiar.org>). In what follows, a short summary is provided, and several pertinent approaches and tools are highlighted.

The six evaluation questions presented in Section 1.2 are related to 13 “work packages”. Work packages represent concrete and connected bundles of information gathering and analysis activities useful for organizing the Evaluation Team's work and for defining the Evaluation Team members' internal deliverables. One work package may contribute to answering more than one evaluation question and, vice versa, the full answer to one evaluation question may require more than one work package. The relation of work packages to evaluation questions is depicted in Table 1.

**Table 1. Contribution of evaluation work packages to answering evaluation questions.**

	Evaluation questions					
	1. How coherent and relevant are FTA objectives?	2. What is the comparative advantage of FTA?	3. Is FTA research of high quality?	4. Is FTA likely to deliver its intended results?	5. Are FTA cross-cutting and support activities relevant and effective?	6. Are FTA institutional arrangements effective and efficient?
<b>Work packages</b>						
<b>A. Evaluation support</b>						
<b>B. Liaison with IEA, Ref. Group, Expert Panel</b>						
<b>C. Inception Report</b>						
<b>D. Objectives and Theories of Change</b>	X	X		X		
<b>E. Matching analysis</b>	X		X			
<b>F. Supply- and demand-side relevance</b>	X					
<b>G. Horizontal and vertical relevance</b>		X				
<b>H. FTA component coverage and structure</b>		X				
<b>I. Sample projects case studies</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>J. Quality of research</b>			X			
<b>K. FTA results to date</b>				X		
<b>L. FTA future results</b>				X		
<b>M. Cross-cutting and support activities</b>			X	X	X	
<b>N. Governance and Management</b>						X
<b>O. Administrative procedures</b>						X
<b>P. Financial management</b>						X
<b>Q. Final report writing and building in feedback</b>						

For work packages D through P, information was gathered in several ways.

- **Document review:** several hundred reports, scientific publications, policy documents, project proposal, agreements and contracts, and meeting minutes have been reviewed, a small subset of which is directly referenced throughout this report. A comprehensive bibliography of all documents consulted is provided in Annex A of volume II of this report.

- **Extraction from project and financial databases:** two members of the Evaluation Team were granted access to project and financial databases of CIFOR and ICRAF. The Evaluation Team was also provided with the results of requested database queries by all FTA Centers.
- **Interviews and group discussions:** about 150 interviews with more than 200 individuals were conducted. Boundary partners survey targeted all partners linked directly linked to FTA and most important global and regional organizations that are active in forest sector and are potential research partners, users of research information or may act as intermediaries in disseminating information. The target group for direct (face-to-face, email or Skype interviews covered the most relevant key global and regional organizations or processes, amounting in total to about 50 organizations. Out of these, 20 were reached. About half of all interviews took place in person and the remainder by phone, Skype or email. If possible, interviews were conducted by more than one Evaluation Team member. In addition to these interactions, several focus group interviews were held during field visits. A complete list of persons and organizations interviewed can be found in volume II of this report (Annex B).
- **Center and project site visits:** CIFOR and ICRAF were visited by the entire Evaluation Team, and Bioversity International was visited by the Evaluation Team Leader and another team member. CIAT, CIRAD, and CATIE were not visited but some interviews were conducted. Team members spent, combined, more than 10 weeks in the field, visiting projects sites and interviewing boundary and other partners.
- **Online surveys:** two online surveys were conducted, and 193 answers received from FTA researchers and 96 from FTA boundary partners, with final response rates of 62 and 38 percent, respectively. Survey results are summarized in volume III of this report.

A number of analysis approaches and tools were used across work packages, some of which are highlighted here.

- **Matching and project characterization analysis.** For representative project characterization, one hundred FTA project proposals and/or grant agreements were reviewed by two Evaluation Team members. For each project, a multiple choice questionnaire was completed indicating the degree to which project objectives matched those of FTA and the CGIAR, and characterizing projects along several criteria. The results of this analysis are summarized in Annex D of volume II of this report.

- **Sample Project case studies.** For in-depth qualitative understanding, 16 Sample Projects (SPs) were selected and studied in detail, including interviews and, in some cases, field visits, by the Evaluation Team with relevant thematic expertise. Sample Project selection was guided by six criteria: i) Coverage of the largest grants, ii) Inclusion of projects in which FTA Centers collaborate, iii) Coverage of projects deemed relevant for this evaluation by FTA Participant Centers, iv) Accessibility, v) Balance between projects started before and after FTA became operational, and vi) Reasonable coverage of components and cross-cutting activities. Analysis results were summarized in team-internal Sample Project reports. Annex F in volume II of this report lists all Sample Projects for which full reports have been produced.
- **Methodology for the assessment of likely future results.** Likely future results are assessed on the basis of two analyses: a brief assessment of the logical coherence of impact pathways and a thorough empirical verification of assumption underlying the theories of change. This methodology is of special importance for this evaluation in view of the short timeframe of FTA operations.

The complete set of analysis approaches, including more detail on the above methods, are summarized in the comprehensive Inception Report to this evaluation (Independent Evaluation Arrangement, 2013).

## 1.5. Timeline, Organization of the Evaluation and Quality Assurance

This evaluation was conducted in three phases: an inception phase (June to September 2013), an inquiry phase (October 2013 through February 2014), and a synthesis and feedback phase (March to July 2014). Emerging findings were discussed with FTA, Participating Institutions, and Consortium Office staff.

The evaluation was managed and commissioned by the IEA, and Evaluation Team members and the Team Leader were individually contracted by the IEA. The evaluation was conducted by a core team of five evaluators and one analyst. The background of Evaluation Team members is summarized in volume II to this report (Annex C). Evaluation Team members reported to the Team Leader who, in turn, reported to the head of IEA. The ultimate recipient of the evaluation is the CGIAR Fund Council. Principal guidance on the scope and the conduct of the evaluation was based on its Terms of Reference and the Inception Report.



The IEA was responsible for the quality control of the evaluation process and outputs, and dissemination of the results. In addition, because this evaluation represents an important learning opportunity for IEA itself – being both the first CRP evaluation and among the first evaluations commissioned by IEA – intense and informal interactions between IEA and the Evaluation Team took place throughout the evaluation process. The Evaluation Team has sought frequent feedback from FTA staff in order to eliminate ambiguous perceptions and potential factual errors early on. For example, for each Sample Project, the team-internal case study reports have been vetted by the respective FTA Principal Investigator or his/her colleagues.

A reference group was created to advise the Head of IEA and the Evaluation Team Leader and to help keeping FTA constituents informed about the evaluation. The reference group represents mostly share- and stakeholders of FTA that have an institutional interest in the outcome of the evaluation.

Separately, an expert panel was convoked by IEA to provide an independent opinion on the draft evaluation report. The primary function of this expert panel is quality assurance. Comprehensive feedback from all groups was received on a draft version of this report and incorporated into the final version when deemed appropriate. Report of the Expert panel is provided in Annex H of volume II of this report.

### 1.6. Changes with Respect to the ToR and the Inception Report

With respect to the Inception Report, all questions have been covered and the methodology has been applied largely as planned.

The treatment of Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Assessment (MEIA) has been removed from a discussion alongside other cross-cutting activities and has been integrated into the discussion on governance and management while widening the scope to also include an assessment of the implications of the planned CGIAR-wide results-based management framework in addition to the originally planned scope.

For greater clarity, this report contains a separate chapter that highlights what added value FTA has brought about compared to a “business as usual” scenario with similar funding but without the programmatic framework of FTA (Chapter 8).

As stated in the Inception Report, this evaluation has not – or only partially – addressed 7 of the 89 specific evaluation questions suggested in the Terms of Reference:

- a question on allocation of resources between components, sub-components and participating organizations has not been addressed other than through expert opinions because of lack of reliable methodology and framework;
- several efficiency-related questions have been restricted to the identification of cost-saving and yield-increasing potentials. No benchmarking of efficiency (e.g. of cost-effectiveness across components or CRPs) has been attempted because of lack of reliable methodology and data; and
- one question on benchmarking research and administrative costs with other CRPs and multi-center programs has not been addressed because of a lack of standardized accounting standard for CRP overhead costs or a similar framework for other programs.

### 1.7. Main Constraints of this Evaluation

Overall, the allotted time and resources were considered adequate by the Evaluation Team to fulfill the task at hand, program and other staff were cooperative, and information was obtained largely as planned.

Within this overall positive frame, a number of factors were rendering the evaluation work somewhat more challenging than originally envisaged.

- Several important developments in FTAs operative environment kept FTA strategies, policies and procedures in dynamic evolution during the time this evaluation was conducted. For example, for all CRPs, an interim phase was introduced and the start of phase II was postponed until 2017, new guidance was issued for CRP structure in phase II, and a draft SRF Management Update has been developed that describes in more detail the planned performance-based system for allocation of CRP resources (CGIAR Consortium Office, 2013a; Consortium Office, 2013). Further updates of these documents are expected.
- In spite of all FTA Centers' support, the assembly of a consistent list of FTA projects and related information and documentation was challenging and information from project databases could not be reconciled with financial data (see Section 6.3). Hence, project portfolio data presented in this report represents a good approximation only.
- The evaluation capacity requirements for several analyses scale with the number of institutions involved. Important functions that are provided by each FTA Center

separately – rather than centrally – could therefore not be evaluated with the same rigor as in single-Center reviews. For example, financial management, management of human resources, communications and capacity development have only been studied in depth at CIFOR, ICRAF and Bioversity International and not at CIAT, CIRAD and CATIE<sup>4</sup>.

- This evaluation was restricted to FTA and does not cover synergies and overlaps with other CRPs in any depth, apart from the interface with CCAFS (CRP6) that is discussed in Chapter 3.

## 1.8. Terminology

Before and during the evaluation, terminology in the CGIAR and in FTA evolved and, in some cases, terms were used without clear definition and with different meanings by different people and in different contexts.

The terms “Flagship Project” and “Cluster of Activity”, introduced for the interim phase and with view to the second CRP call, are only used in this report when referring to activities and planning for the period after mid-2014, when FTA’s first phase ends. The reason is that the concepts behind these terms differ somewhat from FTA Components and FTA Themes and that these concepts are still evolving.

The term “component” is used in the same meaning as in the FTA Proposal for each of the 5 principal thematic program segments in FTA. In 2012 and 2013, components were called “themes” in FTA. From mid-2014 onwards, “Flagship Projects” will represent the main programmatic divisions in FTA but may not necessarily refer to the earlier “themes” as they imply a stronger intended focus on few outcomes.

The term “sub-component” is used to describe the next-layer subdivisions within each component. In the FTA Proposal sub-components were introduced as “themes” but, in 2012 and 2013, were referred to as “sub-themes” in FTA. From mid-2014 onwards, subdivisions of Flagship Projects will be referred to as “Clusters of Activities” but may not necessarily be identical with the former “themes/sub-themes.”

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<sup>4</sup> Priorities have been set in this way because CIFOR, ICRAF and Bioversity represent most of the work of FTA (99 percent of the FTA Proposal budget) and because CIRAD and CATIE joined FTA only recently.

## 1.9. Structure of this Report

This report is the first of three volumes. Volume II contains several annexes and volume III summarizes the results of two surveys conducted for this evaluation.

The present volume summarized the findings of this evaluation in eight chapters. After this introductory chapter, the program under evaluation and its operating environment are presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 describes the objectives of FTA and assesses its relevance. Chapter 4 treats program effectiveness and includes a section on Quality of Science. Chapter 5 assesses various cross-cutting activities and Chapter 6 analyzes the effectiveness of institutional arrangements. Chapter 7 summarizes findings on FTA governance and management and includes observations on results-based management, monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment. The report closes with an assessment of FTA's overall added value and thoughts about the way forward.

Conclusions and recommendations are made throughout this report, at the end of each substantive chapter.

## 2. The Research Program on Forests, Trees and Agroforestry

This chapter introduces FTA after briefly describing its operating environment, the CGIAR.

### 2.1. CGIAR Reform and Creation of FTA

Established in 1971, the CGIAR has grown from a group of four centers<sup>5</sup>, through a series of attempted and successful reforms, expansions, and consolidations to today's global partnership that unites organizations engaged in research for a food secure and environmentally sustainable future. Today, research is being carried out by 15 international agricultural research centers that are members of the CGIAR Consortium. The name CGIAR used to stand for the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research but is now used as a stand-alone name for continuity.

In 2007, the CGIAR initiated a reform process that – with the adoption of a new CGIAR business model in 2009 – led to the present dual pillar structure of “CGIAR Funders and Doers. On the “CGIAR Funders” side are the Fund Council and its Office, the World Bank as Trustee, and the Funders Forum and on the “CGIAR Doers” side the Consortium Board and its Office, and the CGIAR Centers as members of the Consortium.

A central purpose of the reform was to establish clear linkages between investment in CGIAR research and its potential impact on development outcomes, and to prioritize research based on a results-based management approach. Four System-Level Objectives (SLOs) were defined in the Strategy and Results Framework (CGIAR, 2011b), to which CGIAR research should cater.

Between 2010 and 2012, a total of 15 CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs, formerly “Mega-Programs”) were approved<sup>6</sup>. CRPs represent the main organizational mechanism of research in the reformed CGIAR and are planned to incorporate three core principles (CGIAR, 2011b, p. 13):

<sup>5</sup> The *Centro Internacional de Mejoramiento de Maiz y Trigo* (CIMMYT, Mexico, founded in 1966), the *Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical* (CIAT, Colombia, 1967), the *International Institute of Tropical Agriculture* (IITA, Nigeria, 1967), and the *International Rice Research Institute* (IRRI, Philippines, 1960).

<sup>6</sup> Apart from funding to these 15 CRPs, the Fund Council has also approved stability funding for CGIAR Centers and Challenge Programs and funding to support CGIAR genebanks, the long-term component of the latter is sometimes referred to as 16th CRP.

- a strategic approach to organizing research around impact on the four SLOs;
- integration of research across core competencies; and
- clarity on and differentiation of partnerships at the various stages of the research and development process.

Each CRP is to be led by a single CGIAR Lead Center with overall implementation responsibility. Each Lead Center, in turn, stands at the top of a contractual hierarchy with other CRP Participants – CGIAR Centers or other institutions – for implementation of that CRP's work program. Parallel to this contractual hierarchy, and also considered integral part of the CRPs, most CRP Participant Institutions also entertain project contracts directly with bilateral donors. For the case of FTA, these two sets of program and project implementation contracts are described and assessed in more detail in Section 7.1.1 of this report.

The CGIAR Research “Program Forests, Trees and Agroforestry” (FTA) – the program evaluated here – was approved by the Fund Council comparatively early, on 06 April 2011, as part of the second batch of CRP approvals after having been reviewed by the Independent Science and Partnership Council (ISPC) and the Consortium Board and Office.

FTA is led by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), headquartered in Bogor, Indonesia. CIFOR was founded and joined the CGIAR in 1993. CIFOR implements the program together with three CGIAR Centers and two non CGIAR partners:

- The “World Agroforestry Centre” or ICRAF (International Council for Research in Agroforestry);
- “Bioversity International” (previously: the International Plant Genetic Resources Research Institute, IPGRI);
- The “Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical” (CIAT);
- The “Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza” (CATIE); and
- The “Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement” (CIRAD).

## 2.2. Overview of FTA

FTA is a ten-year multi-partner program to be implemented within the Consortium's Strategic Results Framework (SRF) and along the rules and regulations of the reformed CGIAR.

The first phase of FTA covers the period from 01 July 2011 through 30 June 2014, with an initial USD 233 million three-year budget including a USD 90 million programmatic core contribution from the CGIAR Fund (CGIAR, 2011a; FTA, 2011).

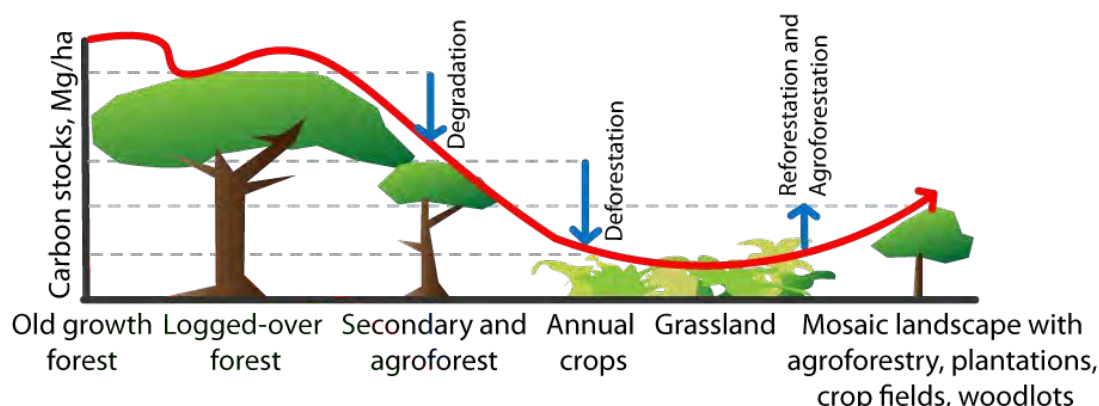
FTA is a program with distributed governance and decentralized management that is governed, managed and implemented by the four founding CGIAR Centers, two non-CGIAR institutions (CIRAD and CATIE), and their partners. FTA is represented towards the CGIAR Consortium Board and Office by its current Lead Center, CIFOR. The Lead Center also holds legal and fiduciary responsibility for FTA *vis-à-vis* the Consortium Board and hosts the FTA Director and the Management Support Unit (MSU).

FTA aims at “[...] enhancing the management and use of forests, agroforestry and tree genetic resources across the landscape, from forests to farms (to plantations)” (FTA, 2011, p. xvii and 6), and strives to “be the leading global comparative research initiative focused on forestry, agroforestry and tree diversity across the developing world as a vehicle for delivering on relevant aspects of the CGIAR’s SRF” (FTA, 2011, p. 15). FTA plans to integrating research across institutions, sectors and disciplines, and across landscapes and scales along the forest transition curve, from relatively undisturbed natural forests to trees in agricultural mosaics. The program intends to develop an integrated vision of forests, trees and agroforestry at the landscape scale, and of the options they provide to improve livelihoods of the poor and protect the environment.

The “Forest and Land Use Transition Curve” as depicted in Figure 1 is a central framework throughout the FTA Proposal and, to a lesser extent, in subsequent FTA documentation. It highlights that FTA’s scope encompasses different stages of a country’s or a region’s land use evolution and different types of forests along that transition curve. It is a useful conceptual tool to place forest and tree-related research into a single framework and can also be useful for describing spatial variation across contemporary landscapes. However, the framework is not more than a conceptual guide and does not provide the scientific rationale for the FTA Participant Institutions to work together in a program. In practice, in each country and regions within a country, the various transition stages and types of forests and forestry coexist at the same time in a mosaic. The transition curve also represents a partial view in the sense that it implicitly disregards vast areas of forests which are not in the land use change frontier, but are in need of sustainable management to enhance their provision of a broad variety of goods and services. It also implicitly suggests that reforestation occurs after a degradation process, which is not the case in forests that are actively managed.



**Figure 1. Forest and land use transition curve (FTA, 2011, p. 7).**



**Program components.** FTA's research activities are organized along five components for each of which a Component Lead Center was chosen:

1. smallholder production systems and markets, led by ICRAF;
2. management and conservation of forest and tree resources, led by Bioversity International;
3. landscape management for environmental services, biodiversity conservation and livelihoods, led by ICRAF;
4. climate change adaptation and mitigation, led by CIFOR; and
5. impacts of trade and investment on forests and people, led by CIFOR.

These five components are understood to be interlinked and interdependent and the ultimate impacts of FTA to represent joint products of synergistic impact pathways that interweave research from all five components (FTA, 2011, p. 26).

The main goal of **Component 1** is to inform a new global understanding of the potential for smallholder and community forests to enhance the wellbeing of the rural poor. Within FTA, Component 1 in particular intends to call the attention of practitioners, academics and policy makers to key issues and approaches in agroforestry and related land use systems, which can be useful to address the complex environmental and productivity problems of degraded agricultural lands throughout the world.

The overarching goal of **Component 2** is to increase the likelihood that important forest and tree resources will be available for future generations while – in parallel – improving the well-being of the poor who are dependent on these resources for their livelihoods. The focus is on developing and testing new forest and tree management practices at a level of the forest management unit and for tree populations across the forest to farm gradient.

**Component 3** aims to understand the drivers of forest transition as a prerequisite for their management, to understand the consequences of the forest transition for environmental goods, services and livelihoods, and to enhance response and policy options to sustain and maximize environmental and social benefits from multi-functional landscapes.

The overall objective of **Component 4** is to contribute to the development of new global and national forest-and-climate regimes and subnational initiatives related to climate change, forests and trees in ways that ensure that they are effective, efficient and equitable. The resulting outcomes are intended to contribute to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and augmenting carbon stocks through better management of forest - and tree-based resources while increasing local and societal resilience through forest-, agroforestry - and tree-based adaptation measures.

Finally, the overall objective of **Component 5** is to contribute to reducing the negative impacts and enhancing the positive impacts of global and regional trade and investment on forests and forest-dependent communities through contributing to major shifts in forest-related trade and investment patterns.

**Cross-cutting activities.** In addition to the program components, the FTA Proposal introduced several cross-cutting and support activities.

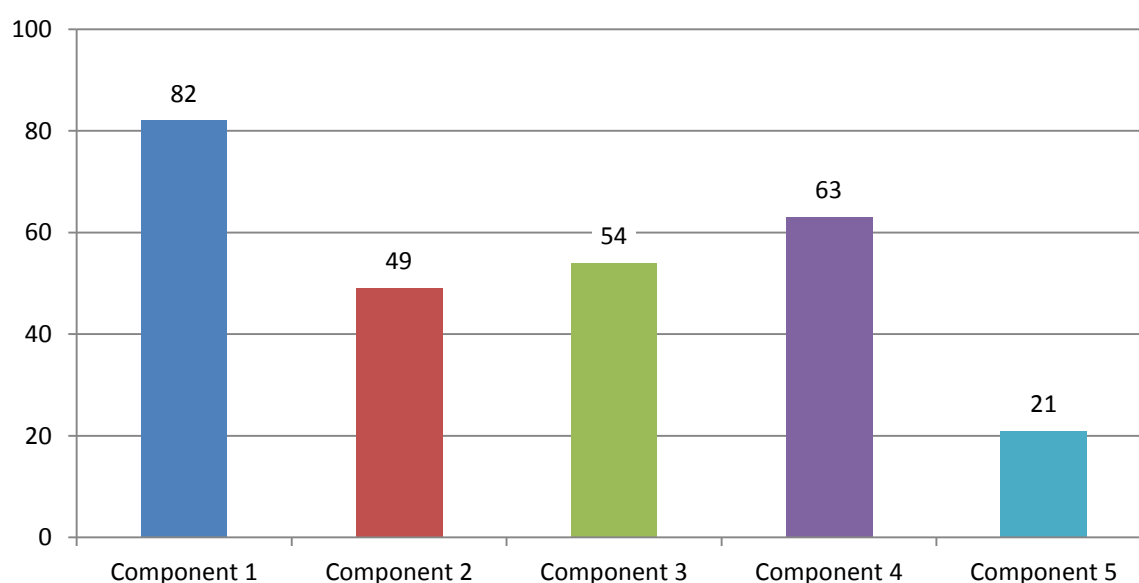
- **Sentinel Landscapes**, an approach aimed to provide a framework for comparative analysis at multiple scales over long times. Sentinel Landscapes are expected to allow the generation of high-value international public goods when conducted within a robust conceptual framework and research design. They aim to monitor the long-term impacts of exogenous and endogenous change at the landscape scale. They also develop and apply field-tested and standardized research protocols to allow global comparative studies of forest transition stages, economic and demographic conditions, and climatic and biophysical determinants of environmental services and livelihood options.
- **Gender-responsive research**, aiming to identify policies, technologies and practices that will enhance gender equity in access, use and management of forests and trees, and the distribution of associated benefits, and to avoid or mitigate negative impacts on women and other vulnerable groups associated with relevant local or global processes.
- **Capacity development**, with the objective of strengthening the capacities of forest/agroforestry research communities, intermediary institutions and networks, and teaching and training institutions.

- **Communication and knowledge-sharing**, aiming to maximize the impact of FTA outputs through creating and implementing an integrated communication program across all FTA Participant Institutions, by creating a strong and dynamic online presence for FTA, creating cutting-edge publications to maximize impact of FTA research findings, marketing FTA outputs to key stakeholders, and promoting FTA-internal communications to maximize synergies.
- **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Impact Assessment (MEIA)**, covering classical monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment issues, and also several objectives related to results-based management as discussed in more detail in Chapter 8 of this report.

**FTA project portfolio.** FTA's work along program components is primarily composed of projects. The Evaluation Team has assembled, from the Participant Centers' project databases and from lists received from FTA staff, an overall portfolio of 244 individual projects. These represent projects partially or fully mapped to FTA with end dates not before 01 July 2011 (FTA's start date). Due to the timing of this evaluation, projects with start dates after 01 January 2014 were not included and some late entries before that may have been missed.

Out of the total of 244 projects, 13 percent represent grants for conference visits and for visiting experts or Junior Professional Officers (7 and 6 percent, respectively) but 87 percent or 213 projects can be considered regular research projects. The project portfolio is balanced between transferred and new research: 47 percent of all projects were already operational before FTA started on 01 July 2011 and 53 percent started during FTA. All projects were assigned to Centers. CIFOR projects represent 39 percent (94 projects), ICRAF 40 percent (98 projects), Bioversity International 12 percent (29 projects), and CIAT 4 percent (10 projects). Regular projects (N=213) were mapped to program components as summarized in Figure 2. Most regular projects (173 or 81 percent) were mapped to a single component, 26 (12 percent) to two components, 11 (5 percent) to more than two. Only 3 projects appeared to be not mapped to any component.

**Figure 2. Number of regular projects mapped to components (N=213, multiple mapping possible).**

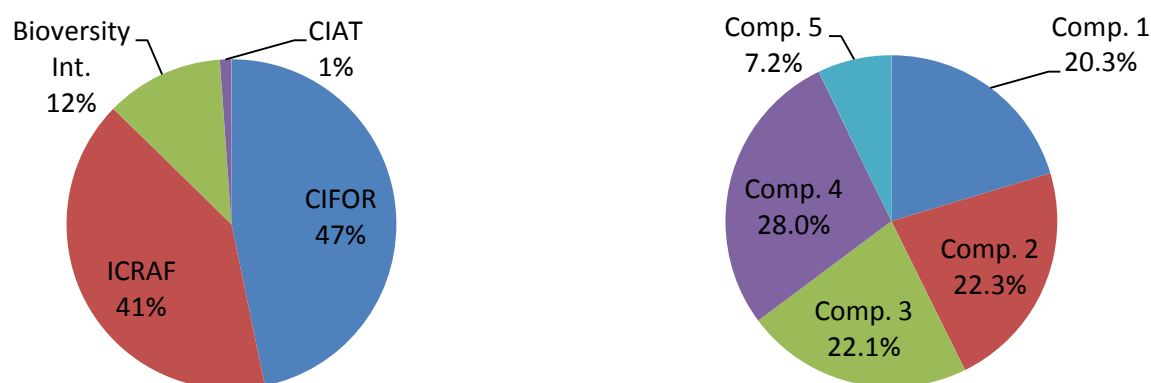


While assembling this portfolio, it became clear that mapping of projects to FTA is not hard-and-fast and that considerable discrepancies exist between project and financial databases. The reader is referred to Section 6.3 for a detailed discussion but should, at this point, keep in mind that the portfolio characterization is only indicative.

**Program budget.** The original, three-year budget allocated to activities in the five program components amounts to USD 220 million, or 95 percent of the overall budget. The remaining 5 percent, or USD 13 million, is reserved for program support and cross-cutting activities<sup>7</sup>. Without taking into account program support and cross-cutting activities, the FTA Proposal budget is distributed across program components and across Centers as summarized in Figure 3.

<sup>7</sup> The FTA Proposal budgets presented in this section are consistent with the program implementation contracts between the Fund Council and the Consortium ("Consortium Performance Agreement under the CGIAR Fund - CRP6," 2011), the Consortium and FTA Lead Center (CGIAR, 2011a), and the FTA Lead Center and ICRAF, Bioversity International, and CIAT (CGIAR Research Program 6, 2011; CGIAR Research Program, 2012, 2011a, 2011b).

**Figure 3: FTA three-year Center and program component budgets, not including program coordination and cross-cutting activities, 100 percent = USD 220 million.**



For its first year, FTA component budget was distributed across Centers as summarized in Table 2. Component leadership clearly correlates with the largest budget share in the respective component.

**Table 2. Center budget shares in percent per component for the first year of FTA (FTA, 2011).<sup>8</sup>**

Component	Component Lead Center	Budget shares in percent <sup>9</sup>			
		CIFOR	ICRAF	Bioversity International	CIAT
1	ICRAF	22	<b>73</b>	3	2
2	Bioversity International	40	12	<b>47</b>	-
3	ICRAF	22	<b>78</b>	-	-
4	CIFOR	<b>77</b>	21	1	1
5	CIFOR	<b>96</b>	3	-	1

The non-component budget, i.e. the remaining 5 percent or USD 13 million of the total budget, is allocated to program coordination (1.7 percent or USD 2.9 million) and three

<sup>8</sup> This first year budget was later shifted to cover the last half of 2011 and half of the 2012 budget.

<sup>9</sup> Percentages may not add up exactly to 100 because of separate rounding.

cross-cutting activities, namely Gender (1.7 percent or USD 3.9 million), Sentinel Landscape (1.6 percent or USD 3.7 million), and Communications (1.0 percent or USD 2.4 million).

The FTA budget is based on two essential funding channels: bilateral project funding from individual donors for individual projects mapped to FTA and programmatic funding for FTA as a whole from Windows 1 and 2 of the CGIAR Fund. Overall, 39 percent of the total, 3-year FTA budget are Window 1 and 2 program funds and 61 percent represent bilateral FTA funding. Within components, the Window 1 and 2 budget share varies from 29 percent (Component 4) to 40 percent (Component 2) and the non-component budget (Program Coordination, Gender, Sentinel Landscapes, Communications) is funded entirely from Windows 1 and 2.

### 3. Relevance

This chapter investigates the relevance of FTA in seven sections. The first section summarizes FTA's theory of change and assesses its component structure. Sections 3.2 and 3.3 analyze the relevance of FTA's objectives in the framework of the CGIAR and in a global context – an assessment that is followed up on a component level in Section 3.4. Section 3.5 summarizes observations on the comparative advantage of institutions involved in FTA and Section 3.6 comments on FTA's *raison d'être* as a program in the context of the CGIAR reform and synergies between its participants and components. Overall conclusions for this chapter are provided in Section 3.7.

#### 3.1. Theory of Change and Component Structure

FTA produced a wealth of descriptions of what it intends to accomplish (i.e. its results framework) and of how it plans to achieve this (i.e. its theory of change). The voluminous FTA Proposal describes intended contributions to developmental and environmental impacts, lists and breaks down objectives by program, component, and sub-component levels, describes related outcomes and outputs, and charts component-level impact pathways. FTA's three-year rolling operational plans update initial milestones, and provide further detail for the program's components along a logframe structure, and with focus on output-level indicators. Recent and ongoing outcome-mapping and theory of change exercises have produced additional, evolving information on the "what" and "how" of the FTA's work.

**Overall objectives.** FTA's overall, programmatic objective has evolved over time. The draft version of the 2013 Annual Report summarizes FTA's objective concisely as "Optimizing tree contribution to human wellbeing and environmental health" (CIFOR, 2014, p. 15). As mentioned before, and to some extent blended into the FTA Proposal text, the program's overall objective is described as: "[...] enhancing the management and use of forests, agroforestry and tree genetic resources across the landscape, from forests to farms (to plantations)" and the program's institutional vision is summarized as "CRP6 to be the leading global comparative research initiative focused on forestry, agroforestry and tree diversity across the developing world as a vehicle for delivering on relevant aspects of the CGIAR's SRF" (FTA, 2011, p. 15). Clearly, FTA is still in the process of searching for a short statement that distills the essence of what this large and complex program is about. Currently, FTA is in the process of finalizing a set of Intermediate Development Outcomes (IDOs) that summarize the categories of development outcomes FTA aims to contribute to. These IDOs are intended to causally link FTA to overall CGIAR objectives.



**Component-level objectives and results framework.** In contrast to the programmatic objectives that are still generic and in evolution, objectives along FTA Components are defined in more detail and have been more stable. The FTA Proposal summarizes component-level objectives as follows (FTA, 2011, p. 15):

- a) Component 1: enhance the contribution of forests, trees and agroforestry to production and incomes of forest-dependent communities and smallholders;
- b) Component 2: conserve biodiversity, including tree genetic diversity, through sustainable management and conservation of forests and trees;
- c) Component 3: maintain or enhance environmental goods and services from forests, trees and agroforestry in multifunctional and dynamic landscapes;
- d) Component 4: reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and enhance carbon stocks through better management of forest- and tree-based sources and increased local and societal resilience through forest-, agroforestry- and tree-based adaptation measures; and
- e) Component 5: promote the positive impacts and reduce the negative impacts of global trade and investment as drivers of landscape change affecting forestlands, agroforestry areas, trees and the well-being of local people.

Each of these qualitative component-level objectives stands at the top of a multi-layered hierarchy of intended results, which are described in detailed in FTA's three-year rolling operational plans (CRP6, 2013, 2012).

- In a first layer, each component-level objective is broken down into a number of qualitative sub-component objectives.
- In a second layer, i.e. within each sub-component, several research “output” categories are defined.
- Finally, in a third layer, a number of “output targets” is listed within each research output category, and is backed up by one or more “verifiable indicators” and geographic priorities.

For each sub-component – i.e. in the first layer – FTAs operational plans also describe intended development outcomes<sup>10</sup> that are backed up by indicators and linked to FTA output categories (layer 2), which are understood to drive those outcomes in a logical and coherent way. For each component, the FTA Proposal also describes objectives and intended outcomes over a ten-year horizon, and provides a set of milestones across sub-

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<sup>10</sup> In the FTA Proposal, development outcomes are either described on the sub-component or the component level.

components (layer 2) or output categories (layer 3). With the exception of Component 4, no cross-component linkages appear in this results framework, i.e. outcomes in one component are usually not linked to outcomes in another component.

Similarly to this results framework, and not described here in detail, FTA's work along cross-cutting activities is described in the FTA Proposal, in operational work plans, and in strategies.

The Evaluation Team is concerned with the fact that the results framework is concrete and specific only on the most granular level. Here, output targets are backed up by indicators that mostly fulfill SMART<sup>11</sup> criteria. Beyond this, FTA objectives lose specificity along two dimensions.

- First, specificity decreases with increasing aggregation from individual projects to sub-components, components and to the entire program. For example, FTA has no clearly defined activity and output-level targets, including quantitative indicators, on the level of sub-components, components, or for the entire program.<sup>12</sup>
- Second, specificity also diminishes along the results chain from activities to outputs, outcomes and impacts. While FTA has defined, laudably, outcome targets, aggregated on or just below the program component level, the corresponding indicators do not fulfill SMART criteria and outcome objectives at more aggregate levels describe categories rather than targets and remain altogether unspecific.

Overall, FTA's results framework appears constructed bottom-up instead of top-down. Rather than logically deducing outcomes, outputs and activities from clearly defined overall objectives, FTA displays detailed categories of activity and output that are iteratively aggregated and explained as contributing to higher-level results.

**Impact pathways.** In addition to the above results framework, FTA invested considerable efforts into conceptualizing pathways of cause and effect along which the entire program, and each of its components and cross-cutting activities, is anticipated to eventually contribute to intended impacts. The FTA Proposal itself goes into considerable detail in conceptualizing planned activities and their intended effects along program components: on some 163 pages, impact pathways are graphically summarized and described, geographic priorities suggested, and the type, role and necessary contribution of partners are described. On the level of sub-components, the FTA Proposal provides additional

<sup>11</sup> SMART is an acronym for: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

<sup>12</sup> Examples for such indicators that can either be aggregated or measured directly at an aggregate level are the share of output targets reached per FTA Component (see Section 4.2), the number of FTA-related publications and citations (see Section 4.1), FTA website visits and downloads, staff capacity trends, or total funding and spending evolution.

information on rationale, research methodology, key research questions, and more fine-grained information on research partners and their contributions. Similarly, integrating across components, the proposal provides several frameworks linking component outcomes to overall FTA impact contributions.

More recently, FTA renewed its efforts to further conceptualize impact pathways along program components, for cross-cutting activities, and for the program as a whole. Prepared by FTA's MEIA Team, graphical impact pathways for FTA Components were further developed during several participatory workshops with researchers of that component. In parallel, several generic program-level impact pathways were developed.

All impact pathways, both those on the program level and those on the level of components and cross-cutting activities, are based on statements of intermediate results that are grouped and ordered in a logical progression. The impact pathways do not attempt to explain individual cause-effect relationships, and do not go into detail on how to progress from one group of intermediate results to the next. Mechanisms, tools and approaches, underlying assumptions, and their realism are not detailed. To the Evaluation Team, the more recent impact pathway formulation exercises are useful for enhancing overall conceptual clarity, for staff education, and to donors and other stakeholders as communication material. Otherwise, the practical value of these exercises remains limited as they remain conceptual and provide only limited information and practical guidance for the FTA leadership group, the senior management of FTA Participant Institutions, and FTA researchers.

The FTA Proposal states that its components are closely interlinked with each other. However, these linkages are not made systematically explicit in FTAs impact pathways or, as mentioned earlier, in its results framework. The outcomes of individual components usually contribute to many IDOs and to all SLOs. FTA is a very large and complex program, hence it is understandable that there are many, sometimes interwoven, impact pathways. However, at this stage, these pathways from outputs to outcomes and impacts remain described in quite generic terms, which make it difficult to use them as a framework for evaluation, especially when different components all contribute to similar impacts.

In particular, the Evaluation Team is concerned about the absence of a clear and convincing information and guidance on how to enact the substantial changes FTA aims to contribute to. In many instances, impact pathway contain large "causal jumps" from scientific outputs to behavioral change, and onwards to impacts on national, regional and global scale, without explaining how this will be achieved in practice. For example, FTA aims to contribute at major, mass-scale changes in the behavior of individuals (farmers, rural people in general, and consumers), communities, SMEs and companies, and in how they interact with each other and with various government institutions. It remains unclear which tools, approaches and partners will be employed to connect research results with those changes,

which underlying assumptions there are, and whether a strong empirical basis for those assumptions exists. Similarly, for intended changes in local, national, regional and global level policies, legislation and institutional arrangements, an underlying assumption is made that by providing knowledge and capacity, these changes will occur. FTA researchers have demonstrated that they understand the underlying difficulties and required pathways well (e.g. Clark et al., 2011), but the present set of impact pathways does not yet apply this knowledge. Overall there is a need to develop more realistic impact targets through a better understanding what research can contribute, taking also into account the resources available, time needed to institute changes, and dependence on many assumptions beyond the control of FTA, or research community at large.

In interviews, FTA's MEIA Team was well aware of these shortcomings and clearly considered the current set of impact pathways and the present results framework as work in progress towards a more integrated, concrete, and empirically founded theory of change.

**Overall theory of change.** The impact pathways and the results framework have not yet been integrated with each other and are not yet further developed into a full FTA theory of change. The Evaluation Team is concerned about the fact that there are not yet any clear indications of how and when this will happen, and when a comprehensive theory of change for FTA will be available, which can serve as strategy and management tool for FTA and exert tangible influence on strategic planning and project selection mechanisms in FTA Centers.

Moreover, the FTA leadership group perceived the impact pathway exercise and, to a lesser extent the development of the results framework, as an important steps in ensuring FTA's continued financial survival in the reformed CGIAR. Interviewees expressed that a causal connection needed to be demonstrated to the CGIAR Consortium Board and Office in order to be eligible for future funding. As a consequence, the Evaluation Team finds that the focus of FTA's work towards a realistic and strong theory of change is skewed towards conceptualizing highly aggregated outcomes and impacts far beyond the direct influence of the program, at the expense of focusing on establishing the basis for a results-based management framework within FTA's sphere of influence, as discussed in more detail in Section 7.3.

**Component structure.** FTA's component structure closely matches the internal structure of its Lead Center. CIFOR's 2008-2018 strategy defined six research domains that now contribute to FTA components. Similarly ICRAF's six science domains directly connect to the first four FTA components. This also reflects the opinion of surveyed FTA researchers: 77 percent felt that the five principal FTA components largely reflected the way the FTA Centers themselves were organized.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> N=155. See volume III of this report for complete survey results.

The Evaluation Team considers these close linkages of FTA's organization with that of its two largest Centers useful. To some degree, it allows to directly map the Centers' research and science domains to FTA without a need for further realignment. In this sense, FTA's component structure is considered relevant with respect to how CIFOR and ICRAF are organized.

In terms of representing an efficient way to logically organize work within FTA, the present component structure seems to represent one good option among several: 89 percent of surveyed FTA researchers felt that the five principal FTA components were a useful way to organize FTA research and 50 percent felt that they were not better or worse than other ways to divvy up FTA research. During interviews, several options to fundamentally change the present component structure have surfaced but did not represent majority opinions when tested with FTA researchers in a survey. Similarly, a larger number of potential readjustments between components have not received any clear support among FTA researchers<sup>14</sup>.

Overall, the Evaluation Team concurs that there is currently no need to fundamentally alter FTA's present component structure. However, several adjustments in component definition and scope are recommended as part of the analysis of component relevance in Section 3.4.

### 3.2. Relevance of FTA's Objectives within the CGIAR

The reformed CGIAR issued several important strategic reference points for CRPs over the last years to which FTA, overall, responds well.

The FTA Proposal reiterates and incorporates into FTA the three Strategic Objectives (SOs) of the CGIAR<sup>15</sup>, which were drafted in 2008 during the CGIAR Change Process and then became part of several CGIAR guidance documents. The current FTA project portfolio also exhibits close alignment to this set of objectives. In an exercise of matching the objectives of 100 FTA projects to these objectives, the Evaluation Team found very good alignment: virtually all projects clearly addressed one or more.

Regarding the CGIAR's System-Level Objectives (SLOs), FTA's evolving programmatic objective statements and the more firmly defined component and cross-cutting objectives clearly cater to SLOs 1, 2 and 4 and can easily be understood to also contribute to SLO 3. The

<sup>14</sup> See question 14 of the Researcher Survey in volume III of this report.

<sup>15</sup> Food for people: Create and accelerate sustainable increases in the productivity and production of healthy food by and for the poor; Environment for people: Conserve, enhance and sustainably use natural resources and biodiversity to improve the livelihoods of the poor in response to climate change and other factors; Policies for people: Promote policy and institutional change that will stimulate agricultural growth and equity to benefit the poor, especially rural women and other disadvantaged groups.

fact that FTA, as a program, can be firmly placed into the context of both the CGIAR's strategic objectives and the SLOs speaks to the relevance of FTA within the reformed CGIAR. This, however, is not surprising as most if not all activities in the CGIAR can be interpreted to cater – directly or indirectly – to one or more SLOs. The recent SRF Management Update describes this as that the SLOs as “less helpful in terms of providing practical information and guidance to decide what research to do, where to do it, when to start and in what sequence.”

Hence, upon a recommendation by the CGIAR Independent Science and Partnership Council (ISPC, 2012), a series of Intermediate Development Outcomes (IDOs) were developed with the intention of linking the SLOs with CRP objectives. In a broad consultative process, the CGIAR Consortium Board and Office developed a set of 11 common IDOs (CGIAR Consortium Office, 2013a, p. 18). Some IDOs simply rephrase SLOs, while other break them further down. In parallel, FTA developed its own preliminary set of six FTA IDOs. For both sets of IDOs, work is ongoing to define indicators.

The Evaluation Team finds that FTA objectives clearly cater to most common IDOs and can easily be interpreted to make some contribution to all. Naturally, FTA objectives also contribute to all FTA IDOs as they were constructed with this fit in mind. FTA IDOs can also easily be mapped to common IDOs: most FTA IDOs correspond to a single common IDO and some to more than one.

The Evaluation Team acknowledges this conceptual fit and – in principle – the ensuing relevance of FTA within the present framework of the reformed CGIAR. This is however mostly due to the generic, much-encompassing nature of IDOs. It is difficult to imagine work implemented by any of the FTA Participant Institutions for which no conceptual bridge can be built to one or more IDOs. Clearly, more specificity is required on the level of IDOs before these can serve as more than general directions.

### 3.3. Global Relevance of FTA's Objectives

In this section, global relevance is assessed in three steps. First, supply-side relevance is assessed, i.e. the extent to which FTA objectives and research agenda are consistent with, or have potential to contribute to the global, regional and national agreement, strategies, policies and priorities. Then, relevance is assessed from the demand side, i.e. by analyzing how well FTA's objectives respond to the needs of intermediary users and, ultimately, intended beneficiaries down to the field level. This is followed by a more detailed assessment of research questions and information gaps for each FTA Component.



### 3.3.1. Supply-Side Relevance

**Fit with existing and emerging international guidance.** FTA has been designed conceptually in such a way that its outcomes and impacts are aligned with the SRF vision, which again supports those MDGs dealing particularly with halving hunger and poverty (MDG1), and achieving greater environmental sustainability including overcoming land degradation (MDG7). FTA does, however, not have objectives related to water which is explicitly addressed under MDG7.

The Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) has presented ten forest-related targets to be integrated into the set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will replace the MDGs.<sup>16</sup> Looking at the relevance of FTA from the perspective of the draft SDGs and these proposed forest-related targets, FTA and its component objectives are overall well aligned with the exceptions of green economy and fresh water related targets.

The review of forest-related international agreements and negotiations suggests that FTA is operating in relevant fields and addressing the thematic priorities of these processes.<sup>17</sup> These instruments have objectives related to reversing the loss of forest resources and related biodiversity through sustainable forest management and protection and forest restoration, increasing the area under sustainably managed production forests (for multiple purposes), reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, enhancing forest carbon stocks, and enhancing the contribution of forestry to poverty reduction. These objectives are ingrained in overall and component-level objectives of FTA, and are well reflected in FTA's current research agenda with an exception of production-oriented forestry.

FTA is well positioned to provide needed information to help with the implementation of key global programs such as:

- the 2002 Forests Strategy and draft Forests and Trees in Sustainable Landscapes Action Plan of the World Bank. Its “poverty reduction/growth/environmental value” nexus will address the related issues of food security, climate smart agriculture, and how forests and trees can build resilience to climate shocks, all of which are ingrained in the objectives of components 1,2,3, and 4;

<sup>16</sup> Forest-related targets and indicators for integration in the sustainable development goals. A draft proposal from the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Convention Biological Diversity (CBD) and related Bonn Challenge, and United Nation Forum on Forests (UNFF) non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (NLBI).



- the GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies, especially those dealing with Desertification and Deforestation, Sustainable Forest Management/REDD and Climate Change). FTA was seen relevant also for GEF-6 that is currently being finalized;
- FAO's Strategic Objectives and related global goals for forests and forestry, including enhancing the role of forests in livelihoods, poverty alleviation, food security and sustainable supply of raw materials and energy as well as mitigating climate change, combating desertification, conserving biodiversity, and ensuring water quality;
- the IUCN Forest and Climate Change Programme that, among others, wants to strengthen the knowledge base for pro-poor REDD+ solutions and methods to assess national landscape restoration potential;
- the EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan that is focused on promoting sustainable and legal forest management, improving governance and promoting trade in legally produced timber and needs information on impacts of planned measures;
- the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration (GPFLR) and its Bonn Challenge calling for restoration of 150 million hectares of deforested and degraded lands by 2020; and
- the existing decisions within the UNFCCC and the ongoing negotiations and partial agreement towards a new climate agreement which should be finalized in 2015.

However, the review of the research portfolio also indicates that when it comes to sustainable management of forests, the balance appears to favour conservation and protection and management of forests for delivery of carbon sequestration services, leaving research on planted forests (from small to large scale) and natural forests for production and commercial purposes with less attention. These are also important parts of FAO's and WB's forest strategies.

**Green economy.** The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20 in 2012 resulted in an outcome document titled "The Future We Want" (United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development - Rio+20, 2012) that regards green economy as a central tool in contributing to sustainable development and poverty eradication, and emphasizes economic development based on sustainable consumption and production. Already before the Rio+20 conference, UNEP and the OECD highlighted the importance of the green economy approach that aims to growth in income and employment driven by accelerated public and private investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution, enhance energy and resource efficiency, and prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services (OECD, 2011; UNEP, 2011).

The Evaluation Team considers the green economy approach a useful framework for working towards sustainable development. However, it still is not well defined, and the role of forests, trees and agroforestry remains unclear (see recent discussion on this in UNEP, 2014). Nevertheless, a strengthened green economy orientation holds potential for FTA. At this early stage, FTA research can also help to define and shape the role of forests, trees and agroforestry in the evolving green economy agenda.

The current FTA agenda has several elements that are consistent with the green economy approach, such as multi-functionality of forests and agroforestry systems, the potential for sustainable forest and tree management, and low carbon development.

FTA's focus lies however very much on forests, environmental sustainability and on adopting a livelihoods approach, whereas green economy goes further and emphasizes mobilizing more public and private sector investments, know-how and technology to generate income, value-added and "green employment." Still, in May 2014, CIFOR organized the Forests Asia Summit to share knowledge and discuss how the region can accelerate the shift toward a green economy by better managing its forests and landscapes, and the 2013-2014 CIFOR Research Priorities document identified green economy as a prospective research priority area.

**Extra-sectoral drivers and opportunities.** Many of the emerging opportunities and challenges in the form of deforestation and forest degradation drivers lie outside the forests and the forest sector. This is an issue that is in particular relevant for REDD+ related research, where FTA is very active, and has links to CCAFS (see section 3.4) and CRPs dealing with water and agricultural crops. The capacity to meet the increasing demands for sustainable provision of water is increasingly threatened by deforestation and other unsustainable land-uses in the upstream catchment areas, and also by converting water regulating natural forests to water-demanding energy crops (Malmer et al. 2010). Improved governance models and better scientific basis for modelling the effects of various land-use scenarios on water resources are needed (Lele 2012, Malmer et al. 2010). Communal land ownership and unclear tenure and property rights are major challenges especially with increasing pressure on forests due to clearing of land for subsistence and cash crops and land grabbing by national and international investors,

FTA is strong in addressing directly forest-related challenges but weaker in dealing with extra-sectoral issues related, for example, to energy, private sector, agriculture, and water as well as land tenure, and in identifying action and mechanisms for addressing cross-sectoral issues. This was highlighted by many of the interviewed global and regional partners and also by CIFOR management, but needs still strengthening. The landscape approach can partly help to deal with these cross-sectoral linkages, but concrete implementation remains somewhat unclear as discussed in this report.

### 3.3.2. Demand-Side Relevance

**Overall feedback.** Surveyed boundary partners directly involved in FTA projects overwhelmingly found FTA research results to be relevant for their organization. These boundary partners also indicated that their home organizations could benefit in various complementary ways from research outputs produced by FTA Participant Institutions. The international and regional organizations interviewed shared an overall positive view on the quality and general relevance of FTA research, but sometimes raised concerns about usability of FTA research. They also seemed to assess the relevance of FTA research from the perspective of the research outputs produced by individual FTA Participant Institutions, since many were not aware of FTA as a program.

FTA's focus on the landscape approach is seen as relevant by interviewees from both groups. Many of the interviewed global boundary partners, such as the World Bank, IUCN, FAO and GEF, promote the landscape approach in their own work at different levels. They will increasingly require landscape-related research information, for example on economic trade-offs between different uses, and on cost-effective technologies for landscape restoration.

These organizations understand the landscape approach as a platform for enhancing and demonstrating the role of forests, trees and agroforestry in the broader development context, and in addressing the forest-agriculture/livestock interface. However, the focus of the FTA landscape approach is on natural resources and bio-physical systems, and less on institutional and economic aspects, which need to be addressed to make the approach sustainable as elaborated earlier in the context of the green economy approach. Interviewees also felt that agroforestry research is very relevant for alleviating poverty, improving livelihoods and nutrition and health, restoring degraded landscapes and even contributing to community forestry development.

National partners and beneficiaries commonly see FTA research as relevant addressing current needs of a range of stakeholders. Concerns were however raised in some countries that FTA's in-country research does not pay adequate attention to building national research capacity, and that it is not adequately integrated with the national research strategies and development agendas.

Despite the overall positive comments about the relevance of FTA research, global and regional partners also expressed concerns that the relevance suffers too often from the "case study approach", and also from being too theoretical and "high level". Case studies are regarded interesting and informative, but for many boundary partners the challenge is to make concrete use of them in widely varying contexts.

Concerns were also expressed that too much emphasis is being put on REDD+ research, leaving other important areas with less attention. This “bias” in the current FTA portfolio possibly reflects the situation that funding opportunities may be overly driving the research agenda.

**Geographic focus.** FTA largely works in relevant areas. The research focuses on biodiversity hotspots, areas under deforestation and degradation threats and with ongoing deforestation and degradation because of population growth and exploitative investments, key sources of GHG emission from land use changes, and also on the most impoverished regions of the world, such as the countries in the Congo Basin of Africa or the dry zones areas in Africa (in particular Component 1) and Middle East.

However, it is difficult to justify an apparent overall focus of FTA research spending on Indonesia and South-East Asia in general, both in the CIFOR and ICRAF portfolio. Since project expenditure data by country was sketchy, these findings should be validated before the spending focus is shifted towards Africa. In case of CIFOR, information available pointed towards a moist forest bias. These issues were raised also in the latest CIFOR external review (Science Council of the CGIAR, 2007), but that evaluation did not see any major problem with a large allocation to Indonesia. There is no question that this research is relevant from the Indonesian perspective, but from the perspective of the current and emerging needs, the regional and country budget allocation may not be optimal, and dry zones everywhere in the developing world should receive more relative attention.

Interviewed boundary partners felt that sustainable management of agroforestry systems in the dry zones is particularly vital to the success of climate change mitigation efforts, since the loss of the tree cover and forest degradation are major contributors to GHG emissions e.g. in sub-Saharan Africa.

### 3.4. Relevance of FTA Research by Component

**Component 1: Smallholder production systems and markets.** This component addresses issues of rural poverty and malnutrition, linked with ecosystem degradation, in some of the poorest countries of the tropical world. Its projects focus on the use of integrative and environmentally sound approaches to advance land use alternatives, building upon existing knowledge and agroforestry and new technologies. The research agenda, and projects, incorporate innovative extension approaches to foster entrepreneurship and innovation (e.g., ICRAF-led projects in Cameroon, Kenya, and Ethiopia). Illustrative examples of the

relevance of Component 1 projects<sup>18</sup> promote sustainable systems, such as combining agroforestry with trees that provide environmental benefits such as soil improvement and soil conservation, while at the same time addressing the needs of smallholder farmers in reference to food and nutritional security, and cash income generation. In addition, capacity development activities integrated into Component 1 projects are also relevant as they respond to important capacity delivery gaps of national partners.

The research projects reviewed in this component focus on contributing to internationally agreed objectives of reducing rural poverty and improving nutrition and health by promoting land uses that are compatible with the sustainable management of natural resources, and contribute to conservation of indigenous genetic resources. These objectives respond to the most urgent needs in rural development and environmental issues in developing countries worldwide.

The Evaluation Team, however, found that more focus needs to be placed on economically (commercially) and environmentally sustainable medium-size agroforestry, related market and policy research, and value chain developments. This includes research facilitating the development of plantation and tree crop management models and agriculture and/or livestock integrated cropping systems, which maintain ecosystem integrity - including biological, carbon, nutrient and water cycles, biodiversity, ecosystem services and social and cultural values – while also contributing positively to economic and social development. In addition, silvopastoral systems' research is underrepresented *vis-à-vis* its potential to contribute to sustainable development. For example, cattle and other ruminants are an important protein source for populations whose diets are often protein-deficient. Cattle raising is also an important part of local cultures, and plays a significant role in smallholder livelihoods across the tropical world. Significant advances have been achieved on improving sustainability of cattle raising systems in Latin America, Australia and other parts of the world using intensively managed silvopastoral systems, which employ a combination of fodder and cattle breeds adapted to the specific agroecological conditions of each tropical and subtropical location. While some Component 1 projects promote the use of fodder species in cattle smallholder production systems, there needs to be increased emphasis on silvopastoral systems research to include expanded use of fodder trees and shrubs along with improved pasture species and trees for fruit, timber and other products in medium-scale silvopastoral systems, with cattle adapted to the specific agroecological conditions of target locations.

**Component 2: Management and conservation of forest and tree resources.** Component 2 includes three clusters of activities, (1) Diversified Forest and Woodland Management (the

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<sup>18</sup> Example projects include: "Improving Sustainable Productivity in Farming Systems and Enhanced Livelihoods through Adoption of Evergreen Agriculture in Eastern Africa", "Tree Crops Development in Africa and Asia to Benefit the Poor", "Global Comparative Bush-meat Initiative".

largest), (2) Tree Genetic Resources, and (3) Restoration of Tree-based Ecosystems. The research projects are designed to foster the conservation, domestication and use of less-known species and other genetic resources for sustainable use, management and conservation of forest resources. The research agenda focuses on strategies to alleviate pressure on forests, as well as on developing and improving techniques to enhance forest regeneration and restore abandoned lands, while fostering interactions with local policy makers to promote and maintain specific activities at local and regional scales.

Research objectives in this component are highly relevant considering the overall CGIAR system-level objectives for sustainable natural resource management and improving livelihoods of the rural poor, especially when applied in some of the most impoverished regions and countries in Africa and in the Amazon, where many of these projects are focused. Continued deforestation and forest degradation have destroyed valuable ecosystems and genetic resources, and reduced the capacity of forests and trees to provide services to the people. To address this, there is a need to preserve and further develop forest land and tree resources and related biodiversity through land restoration and improved management of moist and dry forests and woodland resources. In dry areas, an increased focus is also needed on forest types and species, and forest management systems that are better adjusted to higher temperatures and less frequent rainfalls and related impacts (pests, fire, invasive species, etc.). Research is needed on the preservation of identified priority germplasm and more effective delivery of quality planting material to forest and tree resource managers. In addition, research is also needed on developing sustainable management models for natural forests and planted forests for production.

The selected priority areas for this component, the Congo Basin, the Amazon, and sub-Saharan Africa, are relevant from these perspectives. The Congo Basin and Amazon forests, two of the largest rainforests in the world, are at the center of the international debate on reconciling timber and non-timber production while satisfying divergent stakeholders' interests. Increasing pressures from logging, shifting agriculture, population growth and mining are accelerating land-use change and forest degradation in the region, and threatening the livelihoods of people whose shelter and wellbeing depend on these forests. Given the large number of forest-dependent people living in or near these forests, their management will have a direct impact on local livelihoods.

Within Component 2, the Evaluation Team finds that research geared and utilized towards influencing international negotiations and policies on biodiversity is underrepresented. For example, there is significant potential in helping to further shape the role of forests, trees and agroforestry in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) which is not addressed in the component.

Component 2 research on forest management does not yet sufficiently cover forest resource assessment, forest silviculture, and the development of forest management



models that balance social, environmental and economic aspects. In this context, it is not clear to the Evaluation Team whether this component is fully geared, in terms of expertise and resource allocation, to deal adequately with these relevant aspects of forest management.

Most of the research currently being conducted under Component 2 focuses on few selected species, therefore the Evaluation Team recommends that Component 2 projects expand their focus to cover a larger number of selected species.

Finally, in the Evaluation Team's analysis of 17 Component 2 projects, 7 would better fit under Component 1, and 2 under Component 3, together representing about half of the Component 2 projects that were reviewed. This may reflect a tendency to "keep projects home", i.e. in a component led by that institution rather than mapping them to a component led by another institution where they would be more relevant. This has also been observed in other components (e.g. Component 3). This may be facilitated by the fact that Component 2 exhibits slightly blurred boundaries towards Components 1 and 3 with respect to sustainable forest management and biodiversity, as these are relevant research subjects across components.

**Component 3: Landscape management for environmental services, biodiversity conservation and livelihoods.** This component deals with issues of high relevance to international policies and strategies for climate change mitigation, food security and rural development in tropical countries worldwide. International processes such as UNFCCC, UNCBD and UNFF negotiations are promoting land-use strategies which can be used to improve smallholders' well-being and deliver environmental services beyond carbon sequestration, including water and biodiversity. Their decision-making must be informed by solid scientific understanding of land-use and change patterns, and their impacts on delivery of various social, economic and environmental benefits in different landscapes.

The research agenda of this component includes projects on alternative land uses to mitigate climate change while increasing market value of production, protecting/conserving forest for their environmental values and the role of forests and forestry in food security and delivery of environmental services. Researchers work in the interface of science and policy, with projects that interact closely with local partners conducting conservation/restoration, fostering local community participation and developing procedures for monitoring and evaluation of effected change.

Component 3 research helps filling critical information gaps and has potential to make valuable contributions to the knowledge on forest carbon stocks, other carbon stocks affected by land use, delivery of environmental goods and services, drivers of land use and



forest change, as well as food security and livelihoods. Projects<sup>19</sup> reviewed were found to be highly relevant from the perspective of adding to the body of global knowledge on the above mentioned issues, while also targeting the needs of the local farmers in each of the target countries.

The Evaluation Team finds that further strengthening research on the restoration of degraded lands is relevant. While Component 3 already covers this type of research, there is a need for increased focus on mixed species designs, multi-use native species, and cost-effective approaches and technologies for landscape restoration. The Evaluation Team highlights the importance of community forestry and of communities in managing landscape. Component 3 is already actively pursuing these topics and must continue and further expand on this.

On an implementation level, the Evaluation Team identified a significant overlap between activities in Components 3 and 4: many Component 3 projects were felt to be more relevant under Component 4 objectives. Of 17 reviewed project proposals, 5 were felt to better match Component 4 objectives while 2 should be in Component 1 and 1 in Component 2. This coincides with remarks received in several interviews that, as observed for Component 2, there may be a desire to keep projects mapped to components led by the project-implementing Center.

**Component 4: Climate change adaptation and mitigation.** At the time this report was written, the negotiations in the UNFCCC were in a key stage towards a new climate agreement to be defined in 2015. The role of forest and forestry within these negotiations is defined mainly through climate change adaptation and REDD+. In 2013 the UNFCCC agreed on the “Warsaw framework for REDD+”. The potential role of forests and trees in climate change adaptation was acknowledged in climate change negotiations, but was addressed with considerably less specificity compared to the role of the forest sector in mitigation. There is general agreement that, in order to be effective, a REDD+ mechanism needs be based on solid scientific understanding of drivers of land-use change, on transparent monitoring and verification procedures as well as on securing positive impacts on biodiversity and livelihoods.

The structure of Component 4 allows accommodating a large number of specific research activities under both the mitigation and adaptation UNFCCC agenda items. One dominant Component 4 project – across all of FTA – is the “Global Comparative Study in REDD+ (GCS-REDD+)” which provides a relevant, comprehensive research framework that goes beyond a

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<sup>19</sup> Example projects include: “AgFor Sulawesi: Agroforestry and Forestry in Sulawesi: Linking Knowledge with Action”, “Architecture of REALU: Reducing Emissions for All Land Uses (Phase II)”, “Understanding the Functions of Forests, Trees and Agroforestry at the Landscape Level and Its Contribution to Food Security, Dietary Diversity and Nutrition”, and “Building Biocarbon and Rural Development in West Africa (BIODEV)”

specific project, and gives structure to the main questions regarding REDD+ implementation worldwide, as well as, to a lesser extent, to adaptation and to synergies between mitigation and adaptation. It also enables undertaking research on REDD+ from different perspectives, contributing to the priorities at international, national policy-making or at the livelihood level including gender considerations.

Regarding climate change mitigation, the great majority of projects look at REDD+. The Evaluation Team found that there is a high concentration of projects considering GHG emission reduction from deforestation. The portfolio in mitigation has a strong emphasis at two levels. First, understanding how to break down international (UNFCCC) decisions to the national level and second, analyzing the impacts and requirements for a successful REDD+ from the livelihoods perspective. The sub-national level and the global level are less treated in Component 4. Importantly, the Evaluation Team finds that mitigation research that goes beyond REDD+ is underrepresented. Relevant research questions to tackle are how to connect REDD+ with the ongoing discussions relating to Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU), the landscape approach and the green economy approach.

The portfolio on adaptation covers a wide range of topics and shows an even distribution among them. However, the total amount of activities looking at adaptation is far inferior to those on mitigation issues. The adaptation portfolio is geared towards needs at the national level and to impacts at the local level. Although the sub-national level is mentioned, research activities targeting this level remain rather reduced.

As REDD+ will probably be kept as an important element in the climate change agreement expected by 2015, and as adaptation to climate change is key for addressing other development goals, a significant amount of research conducted on REDD+ and the links with adaptation and with other forest and agro-forest concerns is deemed as relevant.

Geographically, the research on mitigation focuses on hotspots of tropical deforestation and areas with high potential for carbon sequestration. Mitigation research is also relevantly targeted to vulnerable areas. In terms of balance, there is too much deforestation-related research at the expense of research on forest degradation and carbon enhancement in terms of their impacts on poverty and their capacity to provide environmental services. More information is needed on the impacts of climate change, especially on the most vulnerable ecosystems and human populations. Ways of reducing vulnerability and adapting to forthcoming changes must be identified. Research should also help with identifying institutional and governance frameworks that support effective and fair implementation of REDD schemes; this is an area where CIFOR has its strengths.

FTA offers an excellent platform for conducting research on climate change and green economy. Some potential areas for research are comparative studies on potential low-

carbon development pathways of the forest and agroforestry sectors, or design of a set of criteria and indicators for resilient green investments in forest and/or in agroforestry.

**FTA Component 4 and CCAFS.** While this evaluation remains focused on FTA and does not attempt to assess how relevant CRPs are *vis-à-vis* each other on a CGIAR system level, some observations have been made as to the relevance of having a pronounced climate change component in FTA rather than moving this work entirely to the CRP on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS). During the FTA design stage, the existence of FTA Component 4 as part of FTA was challenged and 60 percent of all FTA researchers do feel indeed that this work should be part of CCAFS<sup>20</sup>.

The Evaluation Team perceives the integration of a forest-related climate change component into FTA however as relevant, and does not find that the climate change related work in FTA should be moved to CCAFS. The current division of coverage between CCAFS and FTA is reasonably well-defined. CCAFS currently does not cover forest-related issues, which also translates into geographical complementarity between the two programs. Overall, while CCAFS takes an agriculture perspective on climate change, FTA focuses on forests and agroforestry. While there is some thematic overlap, most topics can be clearly sorted into one or the other program. Although this, by itself, does not imply that the current division of labor is optimal, the climate change topics covered by FTA fit well with the comparative advantages of FTA Participant Institutions, as analyzed in Section 3.5 below. Moreover, the work in other FTA components serves as important input to research in FTA Component 4. For example, Component 3 researches drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, and Component 1 delivers insights on how agroforestry can be used for both climate change mitigation and adaptation. The Evaluation Team finds it useful to minimize interface problems by placing these strains of research under the same program. Lastly, on the level of the UNFCCC, REDD+ is a standalone agenda item with a separate negotiation process. Hence, related research needs to be catered to a different global audience, requiring different types of expertise that are currently found in CIFOR and ICRAF researchers. However, from interviews, synergies between both programs seem not being realized to the extent possible, and closer future coordination and collaboration between both CRPs is advised.

**Component 5: Impacts of trade and investment on forests and people.** This component is relatively small but deals with highly relevant and internationally visible topics in a coherent manner. Component 5 projects have clear objectives and are logically linked to component objectives and impact pathways. However, the review of the entire portfolio indicates that the objectives are commonly phrased in a manner that puts the focus more on mitigation of

<sup>20</sup> Of 150 surveyed FTA researchers that expressed an opinion on this, 25 percent strongly and 35 percent somewhat agreed with the statement that “Theme 4 should be part of the CRP7 dealing with climate Change”. See question 14 in the researcher survey in volume III of this report.

negative impacts of trade and investment than carrying out strategic research to enhance the potential contribution of FTA activities to economic and social development. This said, it is understood that identification of positive action may sometimes require improving the understanding of the impacts of forces and trends working against intended developments.

Globalization of trade and investment, in particular related to commodities such as oil palm, bioenergy crops, food crops and livestock, are driving deforestation and forest degradation in many parts of the world. Illegal production and trade of forest products also pose major challenges to sustainable forest management in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Component 5 contributes to this central thematic area, and carries out research that serves related policy processes, in particular European Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) and its Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) process (discussed in Section 3.3), for example in Indonesia and Cameroon as part of the project “Policy and regulatory options to recognize and better integrate the domestic timber sector in tropical countries (PROFORMAL).” Given the knowledge about rapidly accelerating South-to-South investments in land-resource based sectors in developing and emerging countries, research such as “Oil Palm: Landscapes, market chains and investment flows”, “Economic choices and trade-offs in the Asia region”, “Emerging countries in transition to green economy” and “Chinese trade and investment in Africa” are very relevant and timely in the green economy context discussed earlier. In Cameroon and the Congo Basin in general, national and regional key actors (e.g. COMIFAC) have expressed high regard for Component 5 research as a source of needed key information. At the same time, while the reviewed projects were regarded relevant by the boundary partners, many partners stated the research findings were, by themselves, not sufficient to develop much needed evidence-based policy options for concrete decision-making, and in particular develop solutions that would advance the development agenda.

The global and regional investment and market developments offer significant opportunities for sustainable and profitable forest and agroforestry production, processing and marketing. There is a huge disparity in investment flows between regions and countries, and between larger operators and SMEs, favoring already better-off countries. FTA could do much more in terms of enhancing the knowledge base on the actual financing flows and identify constraints and actions to enhance responsible private sector investment in developing countries by large companies, SMEs and micro-enterprises, including those operating in the informal sector.

### 3.5. Comparative Advantage of Institutions involved in FTA

This section summarizes to what extent FTA capitalizes on the comparative advantages of its participating Centers and key partners, and whether they operate at the right level and within the right segments of FTA's impact pathways to make fullest use of their relative strengths. Overall added value of FTA as a program is instead addressed in Chapter 8. This section is largely built on extensive interviews of key global and regional organizations relevant for FTA and on interviews of national partners.

The interviewed boundary and research partners view the comparative advantages of FTA primarily from the perspective of individual FTA Participant Institutions and not of FTA as a whole. The most important comparative advantage applying to all FTA Participant Institutions is that they are perceived as neutral scientific research organizations. This view is shared among virtually all key partners at global, regional, and national levels. While there are other organizations that carry out similar types of research, those are not always seen as neutral because of their specific mandates or agendas. FTA Centers are considered to be well located to work between governments, NGOs and the private sector due to this strong perception of neutrality.

National research and boundary partners feel that CIFOR and ICRAF play an important role as “hubs” for global research information and good practices that can be shared at national and sub-national levels. FTA Centers can act as mechanisms for transferring new ideas and technology, and help linking global initiatives and ground level needs and action. This is something that the national research organizations often cannot do due to limited capacity and limited access to international knowledge.

CIFOR and ICRAF have built strong global brands and are globally visible with a good reputation for carrying out quality research. CIFOR and ICRAF can entertain long-term and comparative research on a large scale which is not possible for many other research organizations.

CIFOR is perceived to enjoy a comparative advantage in policy-oriented and governance research, and in undertaking research that contributes to different global fora and initiatives including REDD+, FLEGT-VPA, and landscape restoration. CIFOR is seen as having succeeded in influencing global agenda setting through raising profiles of specific issues crucial to the wellbeing of the poor and the environment, for example for the role of forestry in climate change mitigation. CIFOR is also regarded as a center of excellence in REDD+ related research and as world class in its global communication work with comparative advantage in synthesizing research, packaging it and disseminating research internationally using different media. However, there are many other organizations carrying out policy- and governance oriented research - such as IUCN, RRI, and WWF - and CIFOR and FTA can

maintain the comparative advantage if they don't get involved too much with advocacy type of research but focus on quality of science.

Interviews and surveys of global and regional boundary and research partners however suggest that CIFOR lacks expertise in economics, financing and working with the private sector, and has been losing its earlier comparative advantage in forest management, plantation forestry and applied research relevant for community forestry.

ICRAF is a recognized center of excellence for most agroforestry-related research. Over the years, ICRAF has accumulated globally respected experience and knowledge and built networks and partnerships to a degree that the Center is unmatched in its ability to deliver agroforestry research in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa. ICRAF has strong comparative advantage especially in bio-physical aspects, for example in identifying appropriate species for local ecosystems that are also commercially viable, and in working within the landscape approach, including landscape restoration, and reaching out from the forest to work in the rural landscapes to the benefit of local people. In recent years, ICRAF also further developed its capacity in marketing, working with the private sector, and in influencing national policies. ICRAF has long-term experience in working with both national and sub-national government institutions as well as directly with farmers and their organizations, applying a participatory approach to research in development and translating the research findings in a simple way to be more useful for beneficiaries.

ICRAF's role in raising the global awareness about the importance of agroforestry is widely acknowledged at different levels. However, some key global partners see ICRAF's work in agroforestry as too narrow, and suggest that there is a great need to find more effective ways of producing wood and woody biomass for industrial, energy and other purposes in rural areas beyond contributing to livelihoods.

Bioversity International is perceived to exhibit comparative advantage in the conservation of forest genetic resources and being a center of excellence in general conservation of agricultural and forest biodiversity. However, Bioversity International does not have a clear comparative advantage in doing research in multiple use forest management, under different management models and involving a broad range of stakeholders. Bioversity International has relevant human resources in this field but they are largely focused on conservation and management of forest genetic resources; Bioversity does not have the human resources to deal with forest management research that includes resource assessment, forest management planning, silviculture, harvesting and utilization. CIFOR has more resources in sustainable forest management, creating a rationale for multi-center projects combining the expertise (two such projects have been initiated under FTA). Organizations such as IUCN and FAO are better known in this field but are also limited by human resources and they are not research-oriented. In fact, currently there is no international body that could carry out strategic international forest management research



on different forest types and management systems in developing countries. Such research capacity is limited, or even absent in many developing countries, opening in principle space that could be better occupied by FTA with its combined resources.

Budget-wise, CIAT has been only marginally involved in FTA (about 1 percent of the overall budget is implemented by CIAT) and little information on CIAT's comparative advantages within FTA was obtained from interviews. The Evaluation Team however concurs with CIAT's own assessment that it may complement FTA's landscape approach with its crop and pasture expertise, play an important bridging role as CCAFS' Lead Center with related climate change expertise, and provide on-the-ground expertise and presence in Latin America.

These identified comparative advantages are quite consistent with the list of comparative advantages presented in the FTA Proposal which highlight brand name, quality of staff, responsiveness, partnerships, communications strategies, global mandate and local relevance, grounding in local conditions, and experience and track record in global comparative research. Interestingly, this list does not identify scientific neutrality as a comparative advantage although partners at different levels see this as the main advantage of FTA Centers.

The evaluation did not find evidence supporting the claim that FTA Centers would enjoy a comparative advantage in terms of the quality of its research staff *vis-à-vis* other large research institutions such as CSIRO, EFI, other FTA Participant Institutions (CIRAD and CATIE), or some national agriculture and forestry research centers e.g. in Latin America, and especially in universities that are engaged in international research in fields relevant to the FTA. However, as indicated elsewhere in this report, the quality of FTA researchers is good.

Furthermore, FTA Centers do not seem to have a comparative advantage at the national level in communication and dissemination of research results. There is naturally variation, but in many countries there are simply more effective national channels for delivering information, and naturally, when it comes to the dissemination of research results to the field to the resource managers, national extensions agencies and often also NGOs are better positioned.

Most importantly, FTA Centers do not have a comparative advantage in scaling up. Overall efforts in scaling up projects are only incipient. This was evident during field visits by the Evaluation Team in Kenya, Cameroon, Ethiopia, and Indonesia, where project actions in Components 1, 2 and 3 were concentrated in a few selected locations. FTA Centers appeared to be struggling with outreach, with applying research on the ground at scale, and were having a hard time with designing and implementing ways to contributing to effectively scaling up, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.



It is important to view the above discussion also at a more disaggregated level where FTA research components and researchers are engaged with different boundary partners and processes needing research information and with different “competitors”, i.e. other research organizations providing research services. At the national level, in many of the countries where FTA Participant Centers are active, FTA has a comparative advantage over national research organizations and universities in terms of capacity and access to international research information. However, in particular in Latin America very strong national institutions, such as INPE in Brazil or the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM), can be found that seem at par with FTA Centers in specific fields. The main comparative advantage FTA Centers have is the fact that they can carry out much more holistic research and integrate its international knowledge and networks to national research. National institutions tend to be often quite narrowly focused, e.g. FRIM is very strong in research on management of tropical natural, production forests.

When it comes to the regional and global levels, comparative advantages of FTA Centers vary depending on the research themes. In case of research on forestry and climate change there is enough research capacity (research organizations, universities, think-tanks, foundations, and organizations worldwide such as the World Bank, GEF, IUCN, the Tyndal Center, SEI, IRD and FAO, etc.). FTA is only one provider of research findings among many others, e.g. in the IPCC process. However, what makes FTA rather unique is its capacity to work across continents, with focus on a wide range of developing countries, and do holistic research covering agroforestry and tree crops, conservation, forest plantations, bioenergy, landscape management, trade and investment in the climate change context. In case of Component 5, there are other organizations such as WFF, Forest Trends, and IIED doing similar type of research but against these organizations and in research areas directly related to forestry, CIFOR has the benefit of being forestry-specific and a purely scientific organization while also having broad interdisciplinary experience and accumulated experience e.g. in fields such as large-scale investments in the natural resource sector, including oil palm.

## 3.6. Relevance of FTA as a Program

This section looks at the *potential* value added of FTA as a program – compared to a hypothetical scenario of conducting similar research distributed across institutions without FTA’s programmatic framework and structure. This assessment will be mirrored by *observed* value added of FTA as a program in Chapter 8 at the end of this report.

The Evaluation Team sees two principal reasons for FTA as a program. First, a programmatic approach is required to reach the objectives of the CGIAR reform. As stated in the Strategy and Results Framework, the “main objective of the new CGIAR is that of aligning the research of its 15 autonomous Centers to achieve an impact on the four CGIAR system level

outcomes [...]” and that the “CGIAR Research Program (CRP) concept has been designed as an instrument to achieve this greater alignment [...]” (CGIAR, 2011b, p. 44). Second, there are important potential synergies between FTA Participant Institutions and between FTA’s program components that speak for conducting research under one program.

As described in the previous section, FTA Centers are seen as global leaders in many key scientific domains. Overall, FTA Participant Institutions exhibit strong comparative advantages which are, overall, largely complementary. As stated in the above section, in the FTA Proposal and in the Inception Report of this evaluation, many of the research challenges and opportunities are related to each other. Technological solutions to climate change mitigation and adaptation require conservation of existing forest and tree resources, and tree and agroforestry systems that can help with restoration of degraded land resources providing simultaneously livelihood and environmental benefits. Research on improved land and forest tenure systems can provide a more enabling framework and incentives for investing in sustainable management and conservation of tree and forest resources, which would help contributing to the same set of overall FTA objectives.

In order to carry out this type of holistic research addressing the identified priority research needs, it is essential to make use of the above identified comparative advantages of the FTA Participant Institutions under a programmatic framework. While these potential strategic synergies exist, in practice, FTA is still too much like a framework for a large number projects which are mainly relevant as such but do not necessarily yet create a fully coherent entity. However, the Evaluation Team acknowledges the efforts to move towards a more integrated approach based on more active scientific collaboration between the FTA Participant Institutions.

At the same time, care must be taken to avoid unnecessary duplication of competences and harmful competition between FTA Participants. For example, in recent years, ICRAF has been moving from local research towards more policy-oriented research, and is increasingly operating also at the national level where CIFOR has been traditionally strong. At the same time, the increased emphasis on delivering development outcomes through research under the FTA is likely to result in CIFOR strengthening its national focus and moving also downstream to promote uptake of research findings. This will mean a risk of competition between CIFOR’s and ICRAF’s work, but also potential for much more collaboration and constructive exchange of existing experience and knowledge, to make efficient use of the synergies and available resources in a coherent manner. Some thematic overlap and some competition may be actually helpful, as long as it is carefully orchestrated from a programmatic point of view. The Evaluation Team found also other opportunities and demand for strengthening cross-center and cross-component co-operation to make better use of respective comparative advantages.

### 3.7. Conclusions and Recommendations

**FTA theory of change.** Overall, FTA's theory of change still appears under-developed. The results framework – while very detailed in parts – appears constructed bottom-up instead of top-down. Rather than logically deducing outcomes, outputs and activities from clearly defined overall objectives, FTA displays detailed categories of activity and output that are iteratively aggregated and explained as contributing to higher-level results. Impact pathways have remained generic, and do not yet provide concrete guidance as to how to enact intended change in practice, do not specify implicit underlying assumptions, and do not provide empirical backup. In addition, impact pathways and the results framework are unrelated to each other, and somehow detached from implementation practice in FTA's research portfolio (see Section 6.3). Hence, there is a clear need to further develop FTA's theory of change (see recommendation 4).

**Relevance of FTA as a program.** The Evaluation Team finds that FTA's overall objectives are highly relevant, especially from the global public goods perspective. The objectives of program components and cross-cutting activities, such as Sentinel Landscapes and Gender, are also relevant. Overall, there is strong demand for a program like FTA and for the research carried out by FTA Participant Institutions. FTA's objectives and its research agenda are aligned with the SRF vision, relevant Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and draft Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as with objectives of related global agreements and programs. FTA objectives also clearly cater to the overall objectives the CGIAR has set itself, the common Intermediary Development Outcomes (IDOs) and the CGIAR systems four System-Level Outcomes (SLOs). This, however, is largely due to the generic, much-encompassing nature of IDOs and SLOs.

Many of the research challenges and opportunities related to forests, trees and agroforestry are linked to each other. Research that can address the ensuing inter-related research questions requires a holistic, integrated approach and a broad range of expertise that goes beyond what any single FTA Participant can provide in isolation. Therefore, it is important to combine the comparative advantages of the FTA Participant Institutions under a single programmatic framework.

Geographically, FTA works largely in relevant areas. The research focuses on biodiversity hotspots, areas under deforestation and degradation threats and with ongoing deforestation and degradation and also on the most impoverished regions of the world. Based on rather sketchy spending data per country, FTA may exhibit a spending bias towards South-East Asia in general, and Indonesia in specific. Somewhat related, in the case of CIFOR, there also appears to be a bias towards moist forests.

Although, FTA objectives and research agenda are in line with the main trends in the sector, there are some gaps or weaker areas in addressing the key challenges and opportunities as

understood by “the global forestry community”<sup>21</sup> and reflected in the various forest-related agreements, negotiation processes and international initiatives.

Based on the review of the entire FTA project portfolio, some core areas of sustainable forest management dealing with resource assessment, silvicultural methods, harvesting and planted forest development do not appear to receive adequate attention. This is an issue because there is demand also for this type of research and an opportunity for FTA to step in.

The review of the FTA research portfolio and interviews with boundary indicate that FTA is strong in addressing directly forest-related challenges, and has done a lot of work related to extra-sectoral drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, especially in the REDD+ context and under Component 3. However, FTA appears weaker in dealing with extra-sectoral drivers and opportunities. As Section 3.3 and the analysis of current and emerging forest-related trends in the FTA Evaluation Inception report indicate, most of the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation lie outside the forest sector, and there are also opportunities which can be tapped better concerning, for example, the role of forests, trees and agroforestry in contributing to energy and water supply.

In relation to the emerging set of SDGs its likely forest-related targets, and recent international initiatives including the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20, the FTA research portfolio does not yet truly incorporate ideas from a “green economy” orientation. Far from suggesting this still vaguely defined framework as a silver bullet to the world’s struggle to balance poverty with natural resource objectives, the Evaluation Team highlights the need for FTA to address economic factors, such as employment and income, at a scale beyond livelihoods improvements as part of the solution mix in order to research pathways for sustainable growth.

**Recommendation 1. The Evaluation Team recommends that FTA’s program and component-level objectives continue to be pursued programmatically because of their high global relevance. Several adjustments must be made to address emerging research themes, ensure better integration of forestry issues into the broader development agendas, and better balance current research priorities geographically.**

**This recommendation is addressed to:**

- the Fund Council, the Consortium Board and their offices, the FTA Lead Center and its Board, and all other FTA Participant Institutions.

**Key elements (“must have’s”):**

- FTA is continued as a program and continues to receive funding from the CGIAR programmatic funding windows 1 and 2.

<sup>21</sup> These trends and related research challenges were discussed in the FTA Evaluation Inception report. It is also useful to look at the Forests Issue Paper (2013) of the Technical Support Team linked to the ongoing SDG process under the UN, and Forest-Related Targets and Indicators for Integration in the Sustainable Development Goals by the CPF (2014).

- FTA further increases its research focus on:
  - Africa as a whole (i.e. less relative spending on South East Asia after verification of country spending data), and dry zones everywhere in the developing world;
  - transformational change in the “green economy” context, addressing economic factors linked to a low carbon economy and the delivery of environmental services;
  - extra-sectoral drivers of deforestation and forest degradation e.g. linked to agriculture sector, including sustainable production and consumption supply chains, and opportunities related in particular to water and bio-energy; and
  - linking this research more effectively to those development agendas – often beyond the forest sector - appropriate for each component.

Within the CGIARs evolving objectives (SLOs and IDOs), FTA objectives are highly relevant as well. This, however, is largely due to the generic, much-encompassing nature of these objectives, and there is urgent need to provide for more precise objectives that can provide strategic directions to FTA and other CRPs (see recommendation 4).

**Relevance along components.** FTA’s component structure is found to be straightforward and reasonably logical. It mirrors the Lead Center’s research domains and blends in well with ICRAFs science domain matrix structure, and therefore minimizes interface issues. The boundaries of Component 2 with respect to sustainable forest management and biodiversity are slightly blurred towards Components 1 and 3. Across components, tenure is of central importance and deserves additional highlighting. Based on the analysis of the component research portfolio, a number of adjustments for component coverage are recommended.

**Recommendation 2. The Evaluation Team recommends to better balance research priorities thematically, to adjust component coverage accordingly, and to establish “tenure” as a cross-cutting activity.**

**This recommendation is addressed to:**

- the FTA Steering Committee, the FTA Director, the FTA Lead Center and its Board, and all other FTA Participant Institutions.

**Key elements (“must have’s”):**

- Component 1 broadens its scope in agroforestry to include silvopastoral systems of different types beyond those limited efforts already in place at the smallholder scale, continues its efforts to improve value-chains and get more engaged with medium scale, more commercially oriented agroforestry, and enlarges its market- and policy-related research.
- Component 2 engages more actively in influencing international negotiations and policies on biodiversity, better addresses various forest management research issues such as resource assessment, forest silviculture, and development of socially,

environmentally and financially feasible forest management models, and broadens the coverage of species for genetic conservation. Bioversity International avoids “keeping projects home”; biodiversity conservation issues must be adequately addressed across all FTA components.

- Component 3 strengthens its already ongoing work on restoration of degraded lands (including reforestation efforts that may involve mixed species designs, focusing on using multiple-use native species and developing new cost-effective approaches and technologies for landscape restoration), further increases its already strong involvement in community forestry with respect to landscapes, and increases its research focus on institutional, administrative and managerial challenges related to implementing the landscape approach in practice.
- Component 4 increases its relative research focus on degradation and carbon enhancement under REDD+, considers items beyond the current REDD+ discussion (including how to connect REDD+ with the starting discussions on Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU), the landscape approach and the green economy approach), closely collaborates and coordinates with CCAFS, conducts (to the extent possible in the current funding landscape) relatively more adaptation research, and considers national and subnational frameworks more in adaptation and mitigation research.
- Component 5 strengthens economic analysis and generally pays more attention to economic issues (in addition to social and environmental issues), identifies practicable solutions and evidence-based policy options for advancing investment and trade-related development agendas (such as catalyzing more forestry financing and responsible private sector investments).
- “Tenure” is adopted as a cross-cutting activity in a modality determined by the FTA Director and the FTA Steering Committee.

Both recommendation 1 and 2 increase rather than reduced the areas FTA research is recommended to cover. A later recommendation (recommendation 4) will provide the means to keep the overall research activity volume in line with capacities and funding.

**FTA and CCAFS.** The Evaluation Team finds the current division of research topics between FTA and the CRP on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) reasonably complementary, in line with comparative advantages of institutions involved, and useful both for FTA-internal synergies, as well as for connecting to the global discussion on REDD+ that is negotiated as a stand-alone item in the UNFCCC. Hence, no changes to the partition of labour between FTA and CCAFS are recommended.

**Comparative advantage.** FTA Centers are seen as global leaders in key scientific domains of FTA research. The most important comparative advantage applying to all the FTA Centers is that they are regarded as neutral world-class scientific research organizations, which do not aim to push specific agenda.



ICRAF is perceived as a world leader in agroforestry in general, and on research for rural development. CIFOR is renowned for its policy-oriented research, and research in REDD+, early work on forest governance, and for promoting the role of forests and trees in food security and livelihood improvement. CIFOR is also regarded as center of excellence in communication and international dissemination of research findings. Bioversity International has a strong global reputation for conservation of forest genetic resources. CIAT has only been marginally involved in FTA to date, but may offer relevant expertise and regional presence in the future.

CIFOR and ICRAF demonstrate strong complementarity and significant synergies. FTA offers an umbrella under which important additional cooperative growth potential can be realized. Going forward, the evolution of the institutional mandates of both Centers has to be guided carefully, so as to avoid unnecessary overlap of research agendas and related operational competition and to realization existing potentials for more synergies.

**Recommendation 3. The Evaluation Team recommends that all FTA Participant Institutions safeguard their principal comparative advantage of being neutral, world class research institutions, and resist pressures to work outside their areas of comparative advantage. CIFOR and ICRAF must further intensify their already close collaboration to maximize synergies and minimize unnecessary competition.**

**This recommendation is addressed to:**

- all FTA Participant Institutions, including their governing bodies (first part);
- CIFOR and ICRAF, including their BOTs (second part).

**Key elements (“must have’s”):**

- All FTA Participant Institutions continue to operate within their respective areas of comparative advantage. Increasing pressure towards securing development outcomes is not interpreted as needing to grow in-house downstream extension abilities but, instead, addressed through effective partnerships with global, national and sub-national systems and actors with the necessary development capacities and experiences.
- CIFOR and ICRAF increase joint research planning and fund raising in the context of broader cross-sectoral research programs.
- The current cross-integration of members of CIFOR’s and ICRAF’s Boards of Trustees is continued and intensified.

**Further suggestions:**

- CIFOR and ICRAF develop joint national research programs of CIFOR and ICRAF with national partners (NARSs and universities).



## 4. Program Effectiveness

This chapter assesses FTA's effectiveness in reaching intended and unintended results to date, and contemplates the likelihood and necessary conditions for future outcome and impact.

The first section assesses quality of science in FTA. This assessment is placed into the program effectiveness chapter rather than treating it separately since the Evaluation Team considers quality of science as a necessary condition for development effectiveness in research for development programs. Section 4.2 assesses effectiveness along FTA's five program components, and Section 4.3 for the entire program, focusing on synergies and interactions between components. The chapter closes with conclusions and recommendations (Section 4.4).

### 4.1. Quality of Science

This section examines if scientific outputs are of adequate quality, whether scientific staff is sufficiently qualified, enabled and motivated, and whether suitable *ex-ante* and *ex-post* review processes and other quality assurance mechanisms are in place. This assessment stretches beyond FTA: many projects have been ongoing and most staff was in place since before FTA started in mid-2011. Hence, scientific outputs produced under FTA are closely linked to factors predating FTA. It should also be noted that non-written scientific outputs such as adapted germplasm and applied technologies are not addressed in this section. However, the assessments on staff qualification and working conditions naturally impinge on those important outputs as well.

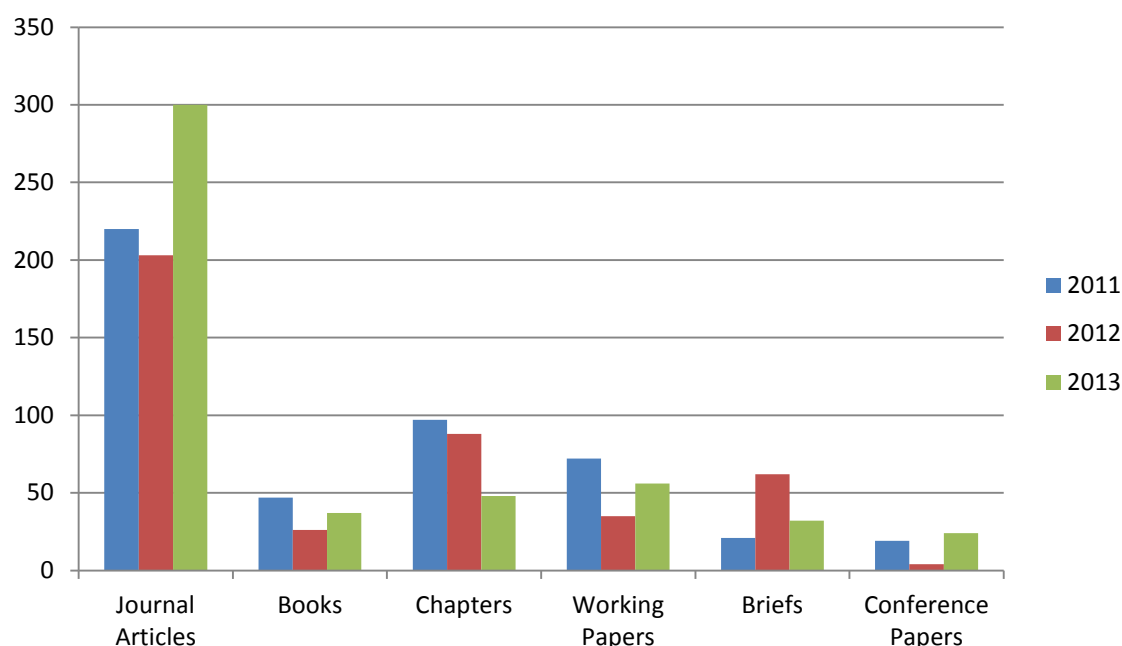
**Staff qualification and publication record.** Overall, the Evaluation Team's impression was favorable. The three thematic experts on the Evaluation Team had the opportunity – and the pleasure – of closely interacting with the Principal Investigators and scientists of 16 Sample Projects chosen for in-depth case studies, with other scientists involved in FTA research, and with the entire FTA leadership group. The team's general impression was that FTA researchers were enthusiastic, committed, productive, and highly qualified scientists.

Most key researchers, including those at non-CGIAR FTA Participant Institutions, carry a Ph.D., and have well established careers in their respective fields and topics of expertise. They are complemented and assisted by other well-trained and motivated scientists with diverse, appropriate educational backgrounds.

The FTA Component Coordinators and the FTA Director showed remarkable publication productivity and impact. Their h-indexes ranged between 15 and 53 with an average of 28<sup>22</sup>. This is considered a good in comparison with, for example, h-indexes between 16 and 22 for the DDGs of CIFOR, ICRAF and Bioversity International, and an index of 28 for the most published member of the Evaluation Team. Overall, h-indexes of the FTA leadership group average around a satisfactory value of 17 but show a large spread. Especially for some cross-cutting activities and for several Focal Points, a low publication and citation record is a reason for concern<sup>23</sup>.

Scientists in the four FTA Centers involved in FTA-related research have produced about 1 400 publications in 2011 to 2013, not counting about a hundred brochures, factsheet, and posters (Figure 4). About half (52 percent) of all publications are journal articles, followed by book chapters (17 percent) and books (8 percent), working papers (12 percent), briefs (8 percent) and conference papers (3 percent).

**Figure 4. FTA-related publication record as obtained from the FTA MSU.**



Close to 80 percent of all journal articles appear in ISI-listed journals and most of the book chapters and books are formally reviewed (81 and 57 percent, respectively), whereas most working papers are not (only 31 percent are formally reviewed). However, as discussed

<sup>22</sup> The h-index measures the number N of publications of a person that has been cited at least N times. As scientist with an h-index of 17, for example, has published 17 articles that were each cited at least 17 times. Of course, that scientist is likely to have published considerably more articles that were cited less often.

<sup>23</sup> As a rule, the Evaluation Team does not discuss the publication record of individuals.

below, absence of formal reviewing does not imply that outputs are not peer-reviewed at all.

Across FTA Centers, CIFOR, followed by ICRAF, lead the publication record with CIFOR accounting for 57 percent, ICRAF for 37 percent, and Bioversity International and CIAT for 3 percent of all publications<sup>24</sup>. Compared to the Center's budget shares in FTA (see Figure 3) and not accounting for any (potentially important) non-written outputs, CIAT and CIFOR have been the most efficient publishers in terms of program budget per publication.

Overall, a balance is kept between peer-reviewed international journal articles and other (also reviewed) publications. From the Evaluation Teams observations, outputs other than those in international peer-reviewed journals, but still reviewed and based on scientific evidence, may be more important for inducing change at the national and sub-national level. The Evaluation Team finds that while peer-reviewed articles in international journals must remain a cornerstone of scientific research, more accessible outputs, if of sufficient quality, can play a critical role in accessing important boundary partners, especially if coupled with FTA's capacities in communications (see Section 5.5). This said, FTA Participant Institutions also have processes in place to buy distribution rights for important publications in peer-reviewed international journal articles. One example is work in two Component 5 Sample Projects<sup>25</sup>, which have successfully produced and disseminated internal papers and policy briefs, and used blogs tailored to address the needs of their respective target audiences. In both cases, the non-peer reviewed pathways were considered more important for inducing impact than those based on internationally peer reviewed scientific publications.

While the importance of "less academic" publications that are still based on solid scientific evidence is high, special care must be taken by FTA and its participating institutions to remain neutral, and to continue making use of the comparative advantage associated with being an objective and unbiased scientific organization.

During the Sample Project case studies, researchers were asked to provide the Evaluation Team with examples of successful outputs. In all components, selected FTA publications have exceeded respective journal impact factors<sup>26</sup> by high multiples of ten or more, clearly indicating publications that have generated high academic interest and have outperformed

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<sup>24</sup> If only ISI-listed journal articles are taken into account, percentages change slightly to 55 percent (CIFOR), 35 percent (ICRAF), and 5 percent (Bioversity and CIAT).

<sup>25</sup> "PROFORMAL" and "Chinese trade and investment in Africa."

<sup>26</sup> The 5 year journal impact factor used here indicates the average number of citations obtained for an article within 5 years from publication in the journal. It is a measure for the academic influence of the entire journal, not of a specific article.

average publications in those journals<sup>27</sup>. Other publications showed a more modest citation record, however without revealing any systematic trend across components or institutions.

Nevertheless, Evaluation Team members found that several publications in some journals with comparatively low impact factors were useful because of their wide and easy access to relevant boundary partners who would, themselves, not cite or publish, but rather apply findings in their work without further academic record.

**Coverage of required skills.** While observed individual scientific qualification was usually high and no clear cases of unsatisfactorily low qualification could be identified, the Evaluation Team found several areas in which expert capacity for certain topics appears insufficient, and may lead to neglect or inadequate consideration of relevant areas of research. According to interviewees, this may be connected to few available sufficiently qualified individuals and hiring locations not considered attractive for hires with family.

In particular, it was felt that there is a shortage of strong expertise in economics, financing and quantitative policy analysis in CIFOR, but also in other Centers, which results sometimes in research that cannot cover important economic and policy dimensions adequately. Economic considerations are naturally very relevant in Component 5, but also in other FTA components, as otherwise there is a risk for producing results which may be technically applicable but not financially feasible. A similar issue seems to exist around for covering tenure-related topics with the necessary senior expertise.

**Working conditions.** Overall self-assessed working conditions for FTA Center researchers average between neutral and very good (see survey results in volume III to this report). The vast majority of researchers are satisfied with the qualification of peers, mentoring by others, and by the availability and quality of technical equipment and technical support staff. The Evaluation Team was pleased that its own impression of a culture of acceptance for innovative ideas and related risk was shared by the researchers' perceptions. Incentives for cooperation across components, Centers, and with non-CGIAR partners were mostly seen positive.

However, when asked a separate open-ended question on how the quality of FTA-related research could be further improved, a third of all respondents spontaneously mentioned that collaboration should be increased. The latter notion of the need to further incentivize and increase collaboration was also suggested during interviews.

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<sup>27</sup> For the peer-reviewed journal articles among those, journal impact factors varied from moderate 0.5 – 5 for Components 1 through 3 to considerably higher factors of 1 – 13 for component 4, and to between 1 and 4 for Component 5. The reader should keep in mind that average journal impact factors can vary significantly between scientific fields and comparisons across components should therefore be considered with care.

Feedback along several other dimensions differed between interviews and surveys. While the FTA leadership group felt that FTA represented a significant burden in terms of non-research related activity, such as increased number of meeting and reporting requirements, researchers themselves were on average evenly split between satisfaction and dissatisfaction with only a small minority expressing strong views in either direction. This was confirmed when analyzing the survey responses of the FTA leadership group separately, yielding significantly lower satisfaction ratings for these questions: three quarters in that group were dissatisfied with the share of time for FTA-related administration and reporting, and about two thirds were dissatisfied with the too limited time they could allocate to research. No significant differences were found when separately analyzing survey feedback for different components or different institutions.

**Quality assurance processes.** At CIFOR, articles in peer-reviewed journals do not undergo additional in-house peer review. Books, book chapters and occasional papers are mostly reviewed externally, while donor and technical reports, working papers, and briefs are reviewed internally. ICRAF recently abandoned its central peer-review approach in favor of review mechanisms within each of its science domains. For peer-reviewed journals, no additional review is required. The Evaluation Team notes and commends that ICRAF has formalized an institutional policy on intellectual fraud in addition to other policies in ethics, data, and intellectual assets. Bioversity International's 2011 publication policy established a publication advisory group that is charged with reviewing the institute's publication record and advise on productivity and quality-enhancing procedures.

In its cursory review of present quality assurance processes in CIFOR, ICRAF and Bioversity, no issues that raised concerns were detected. Both CIFOR and ICRAF are visible in the process of identifying further ways to assure scientific quality, as, for example, visible in CIFOR's draft framework for scientific quality that is currently under development.

**Outside-in boundary partner perspective.** The overall positive picture of scientific quality is also reflected in the feedback received from 76 boundary partner institutions, who utilized research products from any of the four FTA Centers in the past. Within this overall very benevolent feedback, there is a near-perfect 96 percent satisfaction with the scientific quality of research results which might reflect some friendly response bias. No significant differences were found when separately analyzing feedback received for products from different institutions.

Interviewees from 20 international or regional organizations of strategic importance for FTA agreed on overall good scientific quality of FTA outputs, but put this into context and questioned relevance and applicability. Several interviewees in this group felt that selected universities and other non-CGIAR research institutions would deliver higher scientific quality in the particular areas they were interested in. In the context of REDD+, it was pointed out that the relevance and applicability of significant parts of research hinged on a future

agreement on REDD+. Interviewees from organizations with central importance in the forestry field indicated that they had limited use, or did not use at all, of research findings from CIFOR and ICRAF. Several institutions also felt that they didn't have sufficient access to results, especially on the national level. Others, while appreciating the relevance and principal usefulness of research results, indicated that more research on solutions rather than on problems would be needed. In this context, several organizations indicated that research was relevant but difficult to apply in practice.

Clearly, there is some degree of contrast regarding perceptions about research quality in the wider sense between researchers and boundary partners directly involved in FTA projects, and the outside-in perspective of large players with strategic importance in the field. This contrast is apparent also when analyzing effectiveness in the remainder of this chapter.

## 4.2. Effectiveness along Program Components

In this section, FTA's results to date and the likelihood for future results are assessed along FTA's five principal program components. The assessment of effectiveness to date represents a classical *ex-post* assessment of achievements, based on available information and observations made by the Evaluation Team. Annex E of volume II of this report summarizes FTA's own "traffic-light" reporting. The likelihood of future results is analyzed based on FTA's results framework and its component impact pathways.

For any linkage of observed outcomes and impacts to FTA as a program two facts should be kept in mind:

- first, while reported outcomes and impacts are connected to projects mapped to FTA, in many cases, activities that contributed to these outcomes and impacts pre-date FTA. In many cases, significant changes are linked to FTA, but are not caused by it. In contrast, projects designed and started under FTA are likely to have mastered only the first steps along their impact pathways, and demonstrable accomplishments usually consist only in activity records and outputs;
- second, for most changes occurring beyond the direct control of the project teams, for example outcomes such as adoption of policy based on scientific evidence or scaled-up adoption beyond the beneficiaries directly involved in the projects, attribution and contribution are mostly based on assumptions that defy

quantification and cannot be easily verified. Exceptions are rigorous outcome and impact studies that, however, cover only small fractions of FTA's overall work<sup>28</sup>.

In addition FTA has only systematically tracked and reported on output-level targets and achievements. No systematic reporting exists yet on the level of outcomes. The Evaluation Team's assessment is therefore based on its numerous interactions with FTA researchers, project and boundary partners, its in-depth study of 16 Sample Projects, and its review of annual and progress reports.<sup>29</sup>

In order to characterize the strength of principal pathways of FTA Components, the Evaluation Team has assessed and categorized 100 FTA projects along three simple general pathways:

- Option A: the project aims primarily at influencing international or regional policy;
- Option B: the project primarily aims at influencing national policy; and
- Option C: the project aims primarily at adoption of outputs. These can be approaches and techniques, or tangible products such as germplasm.

The results of this analysis are depicted in Figure 5. The different impact pathways are color-coded and the size of the circles scales with the number of projects exhibiting this particular impact pathway. A project can display one or several impact pathways and the number of projects exhibiting several pathways scales with the area of overlap between those circles. The findings of this analysis per component are discussed below as part of the assessment of effectiveness along components.

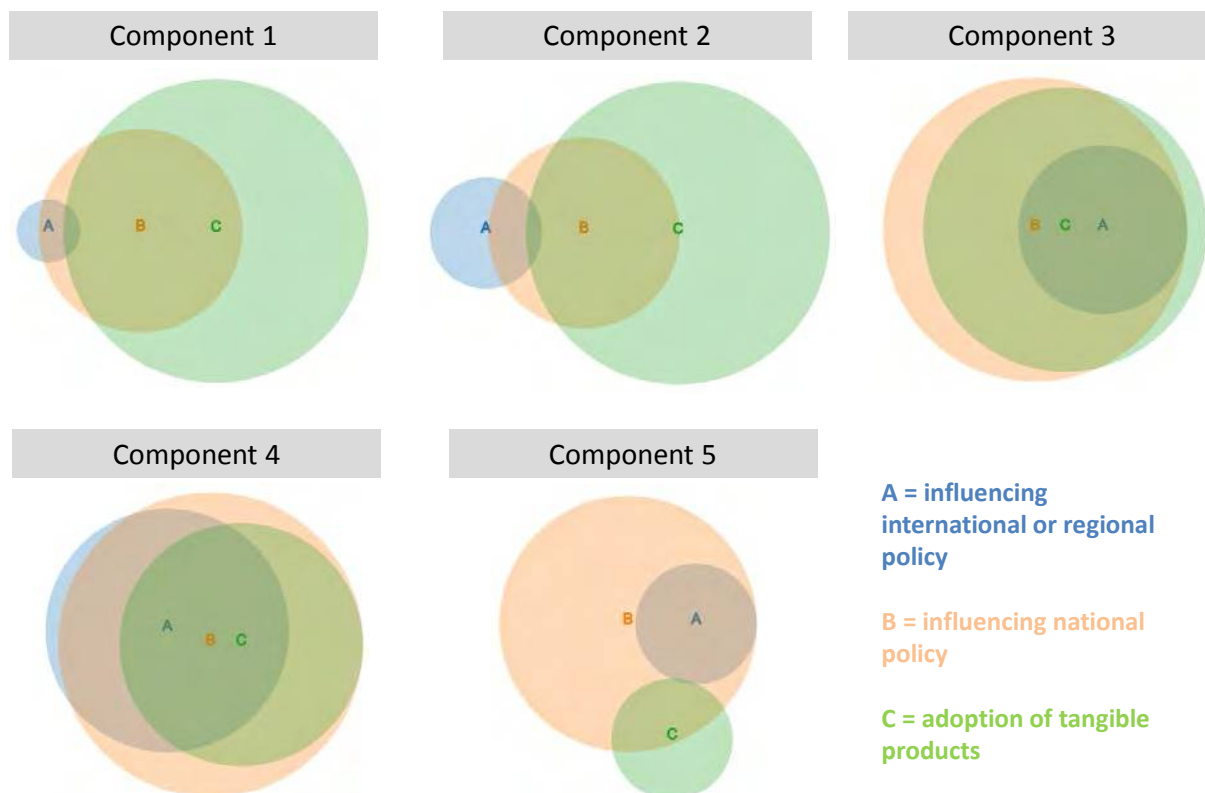
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<sup>28</sup> The 2012 Annual Report summarizes favorable results of two impact studies conducted under FTA's Component 1. The introduction of Rural Resource Centers in Cameroon was shown to significantly increase awareness and more than double the adoption of high-value trees and, in one impact assessment in the Sahel, FTA could demonstrate the validity of the long-standing assumptions that increased tree cover through natural regeneration improves crop yields as well as household income.

<sup>29</sup> Annual Reports from 2011-2013 (the 2013 report in draft form) and the annual CRP Performance Monitoring Report of FTA for 2012 (CGIAR Consortium Office, 2013b; CIFOR, 2014, 2013a, 2012a).



**Figure 5. Characterization of 100 FTA Projects along three principal pathways. Circle areas correspond to the share of projects employing a particular pathway and overlap areas between circles indicate the share of projects using two or more pathways simultaneously.**



## 4.2.1. Effectiveness of FTA Component 1: Smallholder Production Systems and Markets

Component 1 aims at contributing to the following overall outcomes, each of which is broken down further in FTA's results framework (CRP6, 2013):

- enhancing productivity and sustainability of smallholder forestry and agroforestry practices, including food security and nutritional benefits, through better management of production systems;
- increasing income generation and market integration for smallholders through utilization of forestry and agroforestry options; and

- improving policies and institutions to enhance social assets and secure rights to forests, trees and land.

Clearly, as shown in the first Venn diagram in Figure 5, the majority of projects in Component 1 aim to drive adoption of various outputs. In about 40 percent of all cases, this pathway is assisted by influencing national policies.

Based on FTA's own progress reporting for this component, shown in the first row of

Table 3, Component 1 has achieved its output targets in a timely way, with only a minor share of delayed projects in 2012 and none in 2013. Annex E of volume II to this report provides a breakdown of these numbers on the level of sub-components and for cross-cutting activities as well.

**Table 3. FTA Performance *vis-à-vis* output targets, in percent of targets.**

Component	Jan- Dec 2012			Jan- Dec 2013			Completed as planned
1	93.8%	6.3%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	Completed as planned
2	71.4%	23.8%	4.8%	61.1%	38.9%	0.0%	Partially completed
3	80.2%	19.8%	0.0%	92.9%	7.1%	0.0%	Not expected anymore
4	55.0%	42.5%	2.5%	59.6%	38.3%	2.1%	
5	79.2%	16.7%	4.2%	61.5%	38.5%	0.0%	
Overall	77.6%	21.0%	1.4%	79.5%	19.9%	0.6%	

For Component 1, the considerably larger-than-planned amount of bilateral funding raised and mapped to FTA may be a contributing factor in this good performance. In its two first years of operations, 27 percent more than the planned budget was spent in this Component (see Section 6.1.2).

This also coincides with the Evaluation Team's finding that the projects visited, and those whose scientists were interviewed generally appeared to be delivering outputs consistent with stated project objectives. FTA annual and progress reports list a number of output-level achievements in anecdotal narratives, for example, the planting of 1.5 million trees in DRC alone by 2012 (CIFOR, 2013a, p. 3). It has not been possible to verify these achievements broadly, but overall projects appeared to be disbursing funds, implementing activities, and delivering planned outputs according to schedule. In some cases, deviations from project plans were visible that however seemed justified to the Evaluation Team.

Observed Component 1 projects use innovative extension approaches to foster entrepreneurship and innovation, and take advantage of existing knowledge and technology of agroforestry and other sustainable agricultural approaches that have been already used and applied in other contexts, as well as of new technologies that need to be developed

according to the new circumstances, to contribute to solving agricultural production problems in rural regions, as described in several publications ensuing from Component 1.

A good example for this is the "Fruit Trees" project that the Evaluation Team visited in Cameroon, where ICRAF researchers have carried out useful research on optimal extension techniques and procedures in the different location the project was active in. The same project has also been very effective in engaging local farmers in cultivating recommended tree species in their farms, by grouping the farmers in Rural Resource Centers (RRCs) at each project location. The RRCs have been an innovative and effective tool for grouping farmers who receive technical assistance from ICRAF, and have installed nurseries and orchards with the recommended species. RRC farmers have now started processing and marketing their products (e.g. soaps and creams) through farmer's markets and exports with project support. In addition, the project promotes and supports farmers who are establishing nurseries for their own use and also to sell the seedlings to other farmers, thus empowering the local farmers as well as contributing in dissemination of the fruit tree species which are the focus of the project.

In its review of selected projects, the Evaluation Team found it likely that intended outcomes would be achieved.

For example, the above-mentioned project also focuses on introducing *Allanblackia*, which has been very successful in the processing and marketing of tree products, thus improving farmers' income substantially. In the "Evergreen agriculture" project in Africa, farmers appear on track to improve their nutrition with diversified trees and crops promoted by project researchers. The "Bushmeat Initiative", a project that fits both into Components 1 and 2 and is still in its early stages of implementation, also appears on track and will likely achieve its expected outcomes in terms of increasing awareness and achieving greater sustainability in bushmeat harvest, not only from forests but, perhaps most importantly, from gardens and orchards established by indigenous people in peri-urban areas in the Amazonian region in Ecuador.

However, the Evaluation Team is concerned about the likelihood of sustaining outcomes in the project areas, and in particular about scaling-up to reach a broader range of environmental conditions, socioeconomic situations, and people. It was not clear how pilot-scale achievements, or even larger-scale projects (e.g. *Allanblackia*), should drive further out- or up-scaling. The understanding of pathways to outcomes, and contributions to impacts on a larger scale, beyond the projects' sphere of influence, were often sketchy or altogether absent. Overall, it appears to be too much reliance on the assumption that well-documented and widely disseminated case studies would, by themselves, become effective drivers of replication, adoption, and further applied research. Even if some achievements of large projects themselves represent important development outcomes, it was not evident how the gap to achieving mass-scale impacts, as envisaged in the FTA Proposal, was to be

closed. While the involvement of partners for achieving outputs in the project itself was considered adequate by the Evaluation Team, plans to systematically involve boundary partners with the capacity to drive larger-scale changes appeared in general underdeveloped. This is supported by the finding that 60 percent of all Component 1 projects work without including governmental partners, as indicated in Figure 5.

This aspect was visible in the "Evergreen agriculture" project, whose specific objective is precisely to scale out a number of already well-known agroforestry technologies such as the use of nitrogen-fixing species for fodder and for improving soils, protection of trees against excess sun in dry areas, and other. For example, in the Rift Valley of Ethiopia, the Evaluation Team did not see evidence on expansion efforts beyond the farms visited.

That said, promising approaches to addressing the described gap at project level also exist. The Evaluation Team was, for example, positively impressed by ICRAF's approach to research *in* development that brings large-scale adoption and behavior change under real-world conditions into the focus of research and directly involves development partners with sufficient capacities for large-scale development interventions in projects such as, for example, WWF. In the "Improving sustainable productivity of farming systems and enhanced livelihoods through adoption of evergreen agriculture in eastern Africa" project that was reviewed in detail, the project is investigating and finding strategies to scale up the results to regional and country levels: scaling-up within a country (Ethiopia, Rwanda) and scaling-out, to other countries (Uganda and Burundi).

Overall, however, pathways for reaching Component 1 objectives require more active inclusion of a number of boundary partners: National Agricultural Research and Extension Systems (NARES), NGOs, national and local governments and their associated institutions, but also international certification bodies as well as the private sector<sup>30</sup>. In order to orchestrate mass-scale behavior change of smallholder farmers and forest communities, as intended in the FTA Proposal<sup>31</sup>, these partners need to be involved systematically and over periods that exceed the lifetime of individual projects. While Component 1 leadership clearly understood and appreciated these challenges, important limitations towards more selectivity and more synergetic component-level research portfolio management exist, including the fact that the Component 1 project portfolio is largely driven by bilateral

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<sup>30</sup> See, for example, the outcome-level targets and their supporting indicators in the FTA 2013-2015 logframe (CRP6, 2013).

<sup>31</sup> The FTA Proposal, in a rather far-fetched but well documented extrapolation, estimates that after 10 years FTA research will have targeted close to half of the worldwide forest cover and about half a billion people living in or close to forests in Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America and will have contributed to large scale environment and development impacts such as saving between 0.5 and 1.7 million hectares of forest annually from deforestation and ecologically and socially sustainable production and management practices being adopted in 9.3–27.8 million hectares of managed forests in target regions.

funding, resulting in a project-by-project approach that was also observed for all other components.

## 4.2.2. Effectiveness of FTA Component 2: Management and Conservation of Forest and Tree Resources

Component 2 aims at the following overall outcomes (CRP6, 2013):

- understanding the threats to populations of important tree species and formulating effective, efficient and equitable genetic conservation strategies;
- conserving and characterizing high quality germplasm of high value tree species in the forest to farm gradient;
- developing improved silvicultural and monitoring practices for multiple use management of forest ecosystems;
- developing tools and methods to resolve conflicts about distribution of benefits and resource rights in the use of forest and tree resources.

FTA's own progress reporting indicates a mixed performance of Component 2 *vis-à-vis* its targets on the level of outputs. In 2012 and 2013, substantial shares of output targets were partially delayed (about 20 and 40 percent, respectively), and one of 21 output targets in 2012 (5 percent) is not expected to materialize anymore (

Table 3). Compounding factors in this are likely a 20 percent under-spending against budget (driven by less bilateral fund inflows than originally envisaged) until mid-2013 (Section 6.1.2) and several reporting rather than performance-related issues (Section 6.2.1).

This mixed output-level performance matched deviations observed in the Sample Projects that were caused by delayed receipt and difficulties in downstream disbursement of project funds as well as by underestimated operational challenges in project implementation itself. Overall, however, the Evaluation Team's own assessment was somewhat more positive than reflected in

Table 3 for Component 2. In most cases covered, outputs produced so far seemed consistent with the project's objectives.

In Component 2 projects, special attention was paid to forest species that are critical to local communities for food, medicine or income. Several projects in Component 2 aim to generate knowledge to be translated into policies, which will lead to more equitable management of non-timber forest products (NTFP) that are important to local forest-dependent peoples in many countries of Africa and in Latin America (Peru). Projects that were observed are integrative and multidisciplinary in nature, having ecological, genetic, socioeconomic and nutritional sub-components. Projects also carried out activities to

support the development of scientific products by actively engaging students and national researchers in data analysis and scientific writing workshops.

Component 2 projects involve collaboration among Bioversity International and CIFOR (and also with ICRAF in Burkina Faso), with the former leading sub-components related to biodiversity and genetics and the latter on socioeconomic and policy aspects. Overall, the team found that collaboration works well.

Through interviews and field visits, the Evaluation Team could harvest some evidence of strong collaborative agreements with partners and academic institutions in the countries that were visited. For example, in Burkina Faso, Bioversity researchers working on *Parkia biglobosa* trees appeared successful in influencing the manner of tree fruit harvest by local people, after negotiating with alternative local partners that proved more effective in their interactions with the project. On the other hand, involvement of strategically important boundary partners appeared difficult in other cases, for example the involvement of concessionaries in multi-stakeholder dialogues in the context of the “Beyond Timber” project in Cameroon.

In some cases, Component 2 projects have shown successes in influencing policies on the local and national level. For example in Peru, CIFOR researchers produced policy briefs that were used by local authorities to influence policies regarding harvest of Brazil nut by local people in areas where forest concessionaries are extracting timber.

Overall, however, the Evaluation Team found that there is a need to better involve strategically important boundary partners able to mediate large-scale changes. In some cases, it remained unclear how good project-level results could aggregate up to intended, large-scale outcomes through changes of national and international policy and influence on the international and national private sector. One indication is that in Figure 5, less than a third of all projects in Component 2 appear to explicitly aim to influence national policies.

Overall, in Component 2, the Evaluation Team has observed, as for Component 1, that care must be taken to ensure coherence, synergy and long-term alignment beyond single projects to guarantee that significant and lasting contributions are made.

### 4.2.3. Effectiveness of FTA Component 3: Landscape Management for Environmental Services, Biodiversity Conservation and Livelihoods

Component 3 aims at reaching the following outcome targets (CRP6, 2013)<sup>32</sup>:

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<sup>32</sup> In contrast to the sub-component level outcomes presented for Components 1 and 2 in previous sections, Component 3 outcomes listed here are based on “theme-level outcomes” from FTA’s 2013-2015 logframe because the next-higher-level descriptions are sub-component titles rather than descriptions of outcomes. The same applies for the discussion of Component 4 in the next section.



- recognition by government agencies and in public debate of tree cover and forest transitions as a basis for realistic land use and development planning and institutional reform of land use regulation;
- local resource managers in tree-based multiple use landscapes use cost-effective and replicable tools and approaches to appraise likely impacts of changes in land use on watershed functions, biodiversity and carbon stocks as well as on the economic productivity of the landscape;
- land use planners and practitioners use principles and methods resulting in clearer and more transparent recognition of conservation and development tradeoffs in land and rights allocation, as well as adjustments to economic incentives;
- local and external stakeholders negotiate and have access to a range of conditional and performance-based arrangements that support the provision and maintenance of environmental services and biodiversity in productive landscapes; and
- opportunities for win-win solutions in restoration contexts are fully used, while the hard tradeoffs are recognized and contest over them is replaced by negotiation.

On the basis of outputs, FTA reporting for Component 3 shows increasing performance over time of about 20 percent of partially delayed output targets for 2012 to 7 percent (representing 2 of 28 output targets) for 2013 (

Table 3). Since Component 3 has only spent 69 percent of allocated budget until mid-2013 (see Section 6.1.2), this degree of reaching planned outputs is positively surprising. As explained in more detail in Section 6.2.1, several additional, not performance-related factors may have confounded these reported figures.

Some projects visited in Component 3 operated clearly beyond a pilot scale. For example, the AgFor Sulawesi project (“Agroforestry and Forestry in Sulawesi: Linking Knowledge with Action”) had trained considerable more than 10 000 people when visited, with realistic plans to train a total of 50 000. It already worked in 7 provinces, covering some 100 villages. This project also demonstrates collaboration between ICRAF and CIFOR that is further helped by the fact that the Component 3 Coordinator is housed in ICRAF’s regional office in Bogor, on CIFOR’s headquarter campus. ICRAF or CIFOR are in the lead depending on whether there is more emphasis on establishing agroforestry systems to compensate for the detrimental effects of land use changes (ICRAF), or on developing policies (CIFOR). In some observed cases, closer integration of ICRAF and CIFOR-led project components seemed necessary.

Component 3 projects that were evaluated were successful in achieving the adoption of more sustainable and economically profitable land uses by farmers in the project areas. For



example, the project “Architecture of REALU: Reducing Emissions for All Land Uses (Phase II)” has been successful in applying the LUWES (Land Uses of Lower Carbon Emissions) methodologies in Indonesia and in the Peruvian Amazon. Working with farmer associations in the Peruvian Amazon, REALU researchers have been successful at promoting agroforestry systems with cacao and trees which according to model estimations yield lower carbon emissions than other land uses predominant in the project areas. In Indonesia, ICRAF and CIFOR researchers of the AgFor project have influenced legislation that enables local villagers to make use of Hutan Desa, community forests and sacred forests, in manners that ensure forest conservation and sustainable use.

Some of the work that is being undertaken under Component 3 has resulted in significantly more collaboration with other centers (e.g. World Fish, IFPRI), other CRP's (A4NH and AAAS) as well as other institutions (FAO, IIED, USAID): One CIFOR-led project<sup>33</sup> assessed by the Team has identified links between tree cover and nutrition and is progressively leading a rethink of forestry and food systems, particularly from a landscape perspective. This body of work represents a significant contribution of FTA towards the CGIAR SLO's.

The visited projects have established strong partnerships with local NGOs which complement the project activities quite well. For example, the REALU project has established close partnerships with local institutions and beneficiaries, by using a nested approach covering all levels of beneficiaries in each of the target countries. In contrast to Components 1 and 2, Component 3 projects show a satisfactory degree overlap of adoption and national policy-influencing pathways that demonstrates that the policy environment is addressed in parallel to achieving progress on the ground: close to 80 percent of all projects included both, and a third aimed additionally to influence international policy. Some studies projects aim to influence national policy-making; however it is too early to assess their effectiveness since current activities were preparatory only.

As for other components, the Evaluation Team found that not enough attention is paid to the theory of change for scaling up beyond the immediate scope of projects, and managing research towards influencing large-scale and lasting changes.

For development-oriented work to be successful, efforts should be taken to ensure adoption of the recommended practices by involving the target populations from the beginning of the projects, as it is done in some community forestry-related projects, such as farmer cooperatives under this component or work with communities who are extracting non-timber forest products in some Component 2 projects. Participatory approaches, such as those used in most community forestry projects, are proved to be effective in ensuring long-term adoption beyond the life of the projects after funding terminates.

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<sup>33</sup> “Understanding the Functions of Forests, Trees and Agroforestry at the Landscape Level and its Contribution to Food Security, Dietary Diversity and Nutrition.”

In addition to addressing these issues through better project design, more due diligence is required already before embarking on specific projects, as to their likelihood for contributing to future impacts and in further aligning the Component 3 research portfolio towards contributing to clearly defined outcome targets.

## 4.2.4. Effectiveness of FTA Component 4: Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation

Component 4 aims to contribute to the following outcomes (CRP6, 2013):

- research conducted under this component will contribute to the development of new forest-and-climate regimes (currently being negotiated at global and national levels) and subnational initiatives related to climate change, forests and trees in ways that ensure that they are effective, efficient and equitable. (2013 - 2020);
- research conducted under this component will contribute to the development of national adaptation plans and investments as part of new forest-and-climate regimes and sustainable development planning. (2013 - 2020); and
- increased recognition of synergies between mitigation and adaptation leads to increased investment in these types of activities in rural communities to enhance co-benefits of national REDD+ programs (2012 - 2020), increased integration of mitigation and adaptation in national sector planning documents (2015 - 2020), and increased implementation of mitigation and adaptation activities co-jointly by international development agencies and NGOs (2015 - 2020).

According to FTA's own progress reporting against output targets, Component 4 has shown unsatisfactory performance in 2012 and 2013, fully reaching only 55 and 60 percent of all targets respectively (row 4 in

Table 3). At the same time, Component 4 has only slightly under-spend its budget (8 percent by mid-2013) which may explain some of the slow output-level performance. The not performance-related reporting issues discussed in more detail in Section 6.2.1 apply also here. However, because of the large share of outcome targets reported as only partially reached, the Evaluation Team verified a small random sample of several reported outputs, revealing inconsistencies between the traffic light reports (

Table 3) and other sources of information. For example, in the list of publications and the project reports analyzed as part of Sample Projects case studies, several published outputs were not included in the traffic light report.

Overall, most projects in Component 4 deal with climate change mitigation, with about 85 percent of project) dealing with mitigation, 40 percent with adaptation, and 25 percent with both. Within mitigation, the great majority of projects look at REDD+ and, within REDD+, focused on GHG emission reduction from deforestation, while carbon enhancement, degradation, and a combination between landscape approach and SFM/Conservation were significantly less frequently addressed. Most proposals combine REDD+ with other activities, including a better understanding of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs), bioenergy, forest policy and payments for environmental services (PES).

Research on biofuels and bioenergy in the context of climate change is underrepresented with respect to its relevance in climate change mitigation. Although the topic of biofuels is considered in Component 5, the research is focused mainly on the business and investment practices and their implications for different stakeholders, but less on the (real) potential of biofuels for mitigating climate change or on the trade-offs between food security and energy potential (as for example for palm oil).

With regard to adaptation, four main research topics seem to be equally focused on “ecosystem based adaptation” (EBA), adaptation measures and coping strategies, vulnerability assessments, and adaptation policy, with an intrinsic similarity between the first two subjects.

Some interesting but just initial experiences on synergies between mitigation and adaptation include projects like “Adaptation of people to climate change in East Africa: Forest ecosystem services, risk reduction and well-being (AdaptEA)” and COBAM. These experiences serve as a good example of projects that is built upon the need of developing policies for adaptation and increasing climate resilience of forest ecosystems.

In terms of predominant impact pathways, Component 4 research clearly demonstrates the intended focus on influencing national policies, which, in many cases (40 percent) coincides both with pathways aiming to influence international policy and driving adoption.

In contrast to Components 1-3, Component 4 is clearly geared towards connecting to the national and international policy arenas (Figure 5). While impact pathways in the FTA Proposal and subsequent work moderated by MEIA have remained conceptual, but Component 4 has also developed framework proposals on mitigation that further develop adaptation impact pathways (CIFOR, 2012b, 2012c).

From the Evaluation Team’s interactions and interviews with several actors in the climate change arena, it seems that past work now mapped to Component 4 has demonstrated several clear successes in influencing national policy makers and country offices of multilateral organizations in several cases. With negotiators for multilateral environmental agreements, CIFOR and ICRAF visibly enjoy a high credibility. CIFOR is visible in REDD+

related discussions, and the Forest Day (Landscape Day) is quite generally recognized as a very useful platform where CIFOR plays an important role. A number of policy makers have noticed specific FTA outputs that have been disseminated in international platforms. Some multilateral organizations mentioned the use of FTA products for their own purposes, or highlighted e.g. CIFOR's role in elevating important issues to global discussions arenas.

While the Evaluation Team applauds these successes in influencing international decision-making, it was only able to verify isolated incidents of actual adoption. Many representatives of key organizations mentioned that they did not use FTA outputs, or did not know enough about them and that there simply are a great many other information providers.

No broad-based assessment of outcomes and impacts achieved on this level has yet been undertaken, so the evidence is anecdotal. However, it should be mentioned that, as part of module 1 on national processes and policies of the umbrella GCS-REDD+ project, some efforts exist to document impacts of specific outputs at the national level. Even if these attempts are only anecdotal, it appears to be one appropriate approach for following-up on behavioral changes and their contribution to new or adjusted policies. Similarly, the participation of FTA scientists in the IPCC–Supplement to the guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories (Wetlands Supplement) is an important achievement. Nevertheless, participation of only a single FTA scientist in the chapter on Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Uses (AFOLU) of the Fifth Assessment Report of the IPCC is considered a lost opportunity by the Evaluation Team.

Overall, without having been able to verify outcomes of Component 4 research in a systematic manner, several indications exist that the focus on specific elements of the climate change mitigation discussion at the national and international level has helped to align funding and projects towards that purpose. The GCS-REDD+ umbrella project with its basket funding approach including a wide range of forest and climate change topics, currently at some USD 34 million for 2013-16, represents a program within a program that, within its boundaries, allows a high degree of alignment towards project objectives across many sub-projects. It has also provided the platform needed to build long-term relationships and reputation with relevant institutions, platforms and individuals.

#### 4.2.5. Effectiveness of FTA Component 5: Impacts of Trade and Investment on Forests and People

Component 5 outcome targets are as twofold (CRP6, 2013):

- research findings help strengthening policy and governance conditions that reduce the negative impacts of forest-related trade and investment, and promote more inclusive markets and sustainable investments; and

- select global processes and actors, and governments in consumer and producer countries informed with options for enhancing governance of trade and investments for protecting forests and enhancing people's livelihoods.

In terms of reaching its output-level targets, Component 5 shows mixed performance in FTA reports, with 17 and 38 percent of outputs achieved only partly in 2012 and 2013, respectively. As for Component 4, under-spending has been slight (8 percent until mid-2013) but may explain some of the reported underperformance. For other, non-performance related reporting issues the reader is referred to Section 6.2.1.

Component 5, like other components, faces challenges with emphasizing delivery of development outcomes rather than the production of international public goods in the form of research publications. The majority of the existing projects do not refer to impact pathways; however, all of them identify stakeholders to be influenced to deliver the planned outcomes. Projects in Component 5, among all FTA projects, are most clearly focused on influencing national policies (Figure 5), although there are also interventions linked to international initiatives such as RSPO and FSC.

In Component 5, the most common approach to influencing stakeholders has been to keep them informed through workshops, targeted meetings and presentations, as well as by disseminating publications. Usually, at the end of the project, a series of workshops are organized where key government policy makers and other important actors are invited to listen and discuss research findings. While needed and useful, the Evaluation Team does not consider this sufficient to visibly increase the likelihood for national-level policy changes.

One instructive and positive example is the “PROFORMAL” project in Cameroon<sup>34</sup> that was extensively reviewed and visited by members of the Evaluation Team. Some of the project’s research is reflected in the revised draft Cameroon Forest Law, and the project has helped putting the informal forest sector on the agenda in recent negotiations on the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) between the government of Cameroon and the European Union<sup>35</sup>. In interviews, both the Ministry of Forestry and the Ministry of Finance expressed that PROFORMAL had enhanced their understanding and influenced their policy decisions and negotiation strategies. However, this substantial achievement cannot be linked to the three-year project alone, but needs to be placed into the context of existing long and trust-based relationships that CIFOR and CIRAD have established in Cameroon on the past. Hence, while PROFORMAL has caused the observed positive changes, this could only be achieved based on accumulated earlier work. This is a good example of building on past research, networks and trust.

<sup>34</sup> Policy and Regulatory Options to recognize and better integrate the domestic timber sector in tropical countries. The full project covers 5 countries: Cameroon, DRC, Ecuador Gabon, Indonesia.

<sup>35</sup> VPAs are the core documents of the European Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan.

More effective delivery of outcomes will require more time and resources as well as partnerships with organizations/platforms with a comparative advantage, and importantly, with an incentive for promoting the uptake of research findings. The successful “Mahogany and Teak Furniture Value Chain” project in Indonesia was at the onset designed as action research where key stakeholders, including private operators and policy-makers, were involved through the entire research project cycle. This enhanced ownership ultimately resulted in concrete policy impacts. Outcome mapping, which was introduced also to Component 5, can help with the identification of the critical partners and help with the development of the engagement strategy for national as well as regional and international boundary partners.

One can also learn from PROFORMAL experiences that it is much easier to identify and make use of impact pathways based on strong local presence and established contacts, and having gained trust amongst the key stakeholders over the years. In the five PROFORMAL countries, the uptake of research findings was clearly dependent on (the length of) CIFOR presence, the intensity of the engagement, and the inclusiveness of established partnerships. It therefore appears vital to build and maintain trust with national decision-makers and other strategic boundary partners beyond an individual project, and obtain detailed knowledge about impact pathways linked to ongoing national-decision-making processes and platforms. At the same time, it is important to understand the limits of what research findings can contribute to ultimately very complex political decision-making processes. Information is just one input to the process, and it is difficult to know how this information has ultimately influenced decision-making especially since policy processes are often of long-term nature and slow.

A number of Component 5 research projects were planned to influence the behavior of corporations. Based on the review of the documents and interviews, it is not fully clear how this research would concretely influence the strategies of global and regional firms. The latest impact pathway model for Component 5 highlights the importance of developing new, “better” business models, but it is not clear what “better” implies, how these will be developed, and how that work will be linked to the business decision-makers. It is also questionable whether FTA Centers can, at present, provide the needed in-depth expertise of the motivations and constraints experienced in business sector operations, although partnership with CIRAD has improved this component’s resources in these respects. A similar challenge applies for influencing the financial sector. Addressing these players through intermediaries such as standard setting organizations (e.g. RSPO and FSC) – as also is planned in impact pathways – is likely to be more efficient than trying to influence the industry directly. Going forward, it will also be important to link to platforms where private sector is already involved concerning e.g. responsible investment or trade negotiations including processes such as FLEGT-VPA.



The current portfolio and also the more recent proposals indicate that although many of these projects are connected to similar themes or topics within this component, and elsewhere in FTA, they were planned too much in isolation from each other. Component 5 project proposals seldom make references to research in other components, and vice versa. In fact, this problem concerns all FTA components.

## 4.3. Effectiveness at the Program-Level

This section complements the assessment of effectiveness along program components by summarizing observations and considerations that apply for the program as a whole.

**Inclusion of boundary partners.** In the earlier sections of this chapter it has become evident that FTA needs to influence a large and diverse spectrum of institutions and people in order to be able to make significant contributions to large-scale development outcomes. Moderated by the MEIA Team in FTA, the program has begun to systematically work towards improving the understanding of what institutions and individuals reside at the limits of FTA's sphere of influence, and how these can be successfully influenced.

Several Outcome Mapping workshops with FTA component researchers were held in 2012 and 2014, involving partners, CATIE and CIRAD. Further sessions are planned in 2014. Outcome Mapping represents a pragmatic and very useful approach to understanding better how to ensure that outputs are indeed translated into intended outcomes, and to plan, implement and monitor related activities and results.

Central to Outcome Mapping are "boundary partners," i.e. those individuals, groups, and organizations with whom the project interacts directly and with whom the project anticipates opportunities for influence<sup>36</sup>. In several workshops, lists of boundary partners have been identified and characterized. Overall, this work is promising but still in its information and awareness-building stage and the Evaluation Team could not yet observe visible readjustment of project design or project-level work.

Surveyed FTA researchers themselves were optimistic that principal boundary partners of their projects would use or otherwise apply the research findings in their work: 37 percent felt that the influence would be decisive, 58 percent that it would be moderate, and only 5 percent expressed doubts that there would be any influence<sup>37</sup>. This positive projection is

<sup>36</sup> (Earl et al., 2001, p. 1), with slightly adapted wording (changed "program to "project").

<sup>37</sup> N=163. See question 19 in the FTA researcher survey, volume III. Percentages have been calculated without non-respondents and not counting respondents having selected "don't know".<sup>38</sup> N=67. See question 16 in the boundary partner survey, volume III. Percentages have been calculated without non-respondents and not counting respondents having selected "don't know", "Our cooperation is too recent, no influence is visible yet," or "Other".<sup>39</sup> N=64. See open-ended question 17 in the boundary partner survey, volume III.



mirrored by the surveyed boundary partners themselves, commenting on past influences through the work of FTA Participant Institutions: 34 percent indicated decisive influence, 61 percent moderate influence, and 4 percent negligible influence<sup>38</sup>. Asked to back up these statements with concrete examples, boundary partners were generally able to provide convincing descriptions of how research findings had indeed been incorporated into and advanced their own work, had helped in decision-making or had provided necessary evidence that allowed advocating and advancing the boundary partner's cause<sup>39</sup>. Asked about how, from their perspective, relevance and usefulness of FTA research results could be further increased, 31 percent of boundary partner respondents to that open-ended question spontaneously indicated that research collaboration should be increased and 30 percent that dissemination of research results should be improved. To the Evaluation Team, this seems to point towards a need for more proactive, targeted involvement of boundary partners when transferring research-generated insights, as discussed in more detail along FTA's Components in Section 4.2 of this chapter.

The very positive self-assessment of boundary partner involvement by FTA researchers and current FTA project boundary partners was not matched by a series of interviews the Evaluation Team conducted with more than 20 international or regional organizations of strategic importance for FTA.

In most cases FTA was not perceived or known at all as a program in which the work on forests, trees, and agroforestry of six FTA Participant Institutions and their partners is aligned and coordinated. Moreover, also the degree to which these institutions valued, had used or had otherwise been influenced by outputs from FTA Centers was painting a considerably less enthusiastic picture than the survey and interview feedback received from FTA scientists and project-level boundary partners<sup>40</sup>. Several interviewees from the above institutions felt that they had better sources of scientific findings and many shared the view that while they were aware of and valued work by the FTA Centers, their own work had only marginally been influenced by it.

To the Evaluation Team, the latter findings are of concern. While general optimism of FTA researchers towards the quality and effectiveness of their boundary partner involvement is laudable and mirrored by the surveyed group of established FTA boundary partners,

<sup>38</sup> N=67. See question 16 in the boundary partner survey, volume III. Percentages have been calculated without non-respondents and not counting respondents having selected "don't know", "Our cooperation is too recent, no influence is visible yet," or "Other".<sup>39</sup> N=64. See open-ended question 17 in the boundary partner survey, volume III.

<sup>39</sup> N=64. See open-ended question 17 in the boundary partner survey, volume III.

<sup>40</sup> Surveyed project-level boundary partners represent a mix of subnational, national and international institutions and platforms. See question 6 of the boundary partner survey in volume III of this report for more detail.

significant issues regarding the relevance and usability of FTA research results exist beyond this circle.

**Research portfolio management.** Another common thread throughout the analysis of effectiveness along program components was the lack of active research portfolio management, and an ensuing fragmentation of component-level research into what individual research projects contribute.

However, before analyzing this further, it should be noted that these constraints do not apply to FTA activities that are primarily funded by Window 1 and 2 program funds. These activities cover the work of the MSU, the MEIA Team, central elements of the work on gender, Sentinel Landscapes, and capacity building, and, importantly, three projects financed from a holdback fund. For these activities, FTA strategies and results frameworks have indeed primarily driven how work has been planned and implemented, as illustrated in the case of cross-cutting activities in Chapter 6. Nonetheless, this category of activity does only represent a minority share of work implemented under FTA: cross-cutting activities and three holdback-funded projects, out of a project portfolio of more than 240 research projects.

Regarding the dominant share of work implemented under FTA, the lack of active FTA research portfolio management is visible also on the program-level and across components. The Evaluation Team could not observe how FTA objectives and priorities would directly influence the decision to apply for funding, the design and focus of the project proposals, the negotiations resulting in a grant agreement, and progress reporting back to the bilateral donor. All of these activities appear to happen largely as they would have happened in the absence of FTA. Instead, the content and focus of projects appears to be driven primarily by two factors: the strategies, priorities and preferences of bilateral donors and those of FTA Participant Institutions implementing the projects, putting into question FTA's ability to align and focus research across projects, components, and over longer periods of time, on its program objectives.

This observation is supported by the Evaluation Team's assessment of 100 proposals and grant agreements of projects mapped to FTA. Several exceptions acknowledged, no clear trend towards integration of those projects into the framework of FTA was discernible for projects starting after FTA became operational. This was also confirmed by interviews with FTA researchers. While some new proposals and grant agreements mention FTA, others do not. Those that do mention FTA usually do not contain a requirement for the project to be integrated into FTA, do not specify how the project will contribute to achieving FTA's objectives, and do not establish links between FTA and project-related reporting requirements. On the contrary, the research portfolio appears to be managed largely "passively" by selecting, from the cluster of available projects, those project components or

entire projects that exhibit the best fit with FTA objectives and “map” them to the FTA project portfolio.

Slightly paradoxically, this passive approach does not signify that the current FTA project portfolio is incoherent *vis-à-vis* FTA objectives or entirely without synergy. On the contrary, current FTA projects exhibit an excellent fit both with the CGIAR’s strategic objectives, and virtually all comfortably fit well with one or more component objective. In an exercise of matching the objectives of 100 FTA projects to the CGIAR’s three strategic objectives and to the FTA component objectives, the Evaluation Team found that virtually all projects clearly addressed one or more of the strategic objectives, and one or more of the component objectives. This “paradox” can be explained by the genesis of FTA during which the programmatic framework was derived from the strategies, organization structures, and existing project portfolios of the four FTA Centers. Moreover, it can be assumed that FTA Participant Institutions’ project portfolios – whether mapped to FTA or not – exhibit some level of programmatic coherence and synergies between projects. In some cases, such coherence was clearly visible and was mentioned in the discussion of effectiveness along program components in Section 4.2 of this chapter, such as for the Global Comparative Study on REDD+ or the PRO-FORMAL project in Cameroon. However, these important instances of coherence, focus and synergy are largely due to already ongoing lines of research, managed under the FTA Participant Institutions’ own strategies.

However, the current practice of assembling the FTA project portfolio, instead of managing it more actively, does pose problems once FTA objectives will be specified further, as recommended in this report and by current Consortium guidance. Without more active portfolio management guidance and capacities, FTA and its Participant Institutions will face severe challenges in adapting and following this evolution.

A number of reasons contribute to the *status quo*, some of which have been highlighted in the previous section. These underlying constraints need to be understood and addressed in order for FTA to be able to apply more active research portfolio management to successfully align its work towards its program objectives, and to allow FTA Participant Institutions to safeguard coherence between their institutional strategies and priorities and those of FTA.

**First**, work on impact pathways is in its early stages and not yet fit for providing concrete and practical guidance. In interviews, the FTA Director and MEIA Team members fully agreed that the present framework is still too generic and mostly aimed to establish conceptual clarity among FTA researchers. Clearly, more work is required to move these frameworks to a more concrete and realistic level, with focus on what can be done within FTA’s sphere of influence, and to use the resulting framework as a strategy and management tool in FTA. On the program level, this needs to explicitly address how the program’s five components and cross-cutting activities are adding up to something larger than the sum of its parts. Currently, only the Component 4 results framework includes

concrete inter-component linkages. On the level of individual FTA projects, impact pathways and theories of change are usually not explicitly formulated. In an analysis of 100 FTA project proposals and grant agreements, the Evaluation Team found that only in a quarter of all cases the theory of change or the impact pathway was explicitly described. In about 40 percent of all cases, projects described only vaguely, and in a third of all cases, not at all. Therefore, in addition to impact pathways in the component and program level, theories of change on the level of individual projects need to be strengthened and embedded into the program's overall theory of change.

**Second**, it is in FTA's Centers' responsibility and mandate to develop strategies according to their institutional mandate and to manage their research portfolios accordingly. FTA Centers are legally independent international institutions with established mandates and responsibilities and accountabilities towards their donors and a wide range of stakeholders. In the view of the Evaluation Team, and that of many senior interviewees throughout the CGIAR system, it has been a critical omission in the CGIAR reform process to, early on, not properly work towards integrating the very idea of FTA as a cross-Center program into FTA Center strategies, and to ensure continued harmonization of program and Center strategies and priorities with each other. None of the Centers mostly involved in FTA have updated their corporate strategies, or otherwise elaborated on how Center and FTA strategies should be aligned, and how this alignment can be maintained with evolving FTA objectives. Only ICRAF's latest strategy refresh addresses CRPs at all. Complementarily, the FTA Proposal also remains silent on this issue. As a result, very different perceptions exist as to whether program strategy should drive Center strategy, or vice versa. In Centers, the Evaluation Team has often heard that FTA should be understood as a framework into which Centers would map the part of their project portfolio that happened to coincide with FTA's objectives and impact pathways. Interviewees in the CGIAR Consortium Office, and Consortium policies and guidelines, clearly aim instead to active FTA research portfolio management, ultimately driven by priorities established by the Consortium Board and Office. To the Evaluation Team, two extreme (hypothetical) cases should be avoided:

- FTA participant Institutions cannot reasonably be expected to work against their own strategies and interests. Moreover, FTA Participant Institutions' intended role is that of active partners with ownership for the program rather than that of research contractors;
- in the other extreme, FTA cannot succeed as a mere label on a number of projects that would have happened anyway. There needs to be a significant ability of managing the FTA research portfolio as one coherent program.

To the Evaluation Team, there is an urgent need for establishing a shared understanding and agreement on these issues, and to ensure that Center strategies and priorities and their respective roles and shares in FTA are – and continue to be – aligned. Many interviewees

have described this as “FTA *and* Centers” instead of “FTA *or* Centers.” This also includes a continued alignment of FTA program strategy with the mandates and comparative advantages of its participating institutions. It is clear that there is no simple recipe for such mutual alignment. The evolving nature of the CGIAR (e.g. a reduction in the numbers of CRPs that was discussed when this report was written), the fact that some Centers need to accommodate several CRPs into their institutional strategies, and how to solve CRP capacity issues based on Center staffing strategies, all represent formidable challenges that need to be addressed.

**Third**, and closely connected to the previous point, the research portfolios of FTA Participant Institutions are mostly driven by individual bilateral project donors. In the current funding situation, Window 1 and 2, FTA funds represent only 39 percent of the overall FTA budget and bilaterally funded projects represent the lion’s share of FTA’s project portfolio. Hence, FTA Participant Institutions have important accountabilities to bilateral project donors, some of which are not members of the CGIAR and many of which do not appear fully aligned with CGIAR policies and FTA priorities (see Section 6.1.1).

**Fourth**, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, FTA currently does not possess the necessary governance structure or management autonomy to drive active FTA portfolio management with adequate balance of all shareholders, i.e. the Consortium Board and Office and the Centers. Several recommendations are issued in Chapter 7 to remedy this situation.

## 4.4. Conclusions and Recommendations

**Results framework, theory of change, and active portfolio management.** In order to make a significant contribution to large-scale development outcomes, FTA needs to strengthen its results framework, further develop its impact pathways, and align both in a comprehensive theory of change for FTA. Within this theory of change, FTA should begin results-oriented management of its research portfolio.

As analyzed in Section 3.1, the current results framework is biased towards outputs and does not provide concrete targets on the level of outcomes. Based on the observations made in this report, the Evaluation Team recommends introducing a series of concrete objectives on the level of adoption and use of FTA research outputs, which can introduce required cohesion across and alignment between projects and allow them to add their results towards reaching that target. For example, these targets could be derived from a strategic geographical priority assessment of regions, countries and Sentinel Landscapes where FTA can add most value, i.e. where significant development potential exists and where conditions are already conducive for uptake.

For example, for pathways based on influencing national policies, it seems useful to focus on objectives in countries where FTA can have impact at the national level, following empirically verified pathways of how key actors and policy-makers can be influenced in those countries' concrete circumstances. For pathways aimed to induce change at an international policy level, strong thematic focus has proven useful, and participation of FTA staff in advisory circles may be one among several useful indicators. For pathways aimed to increase adoption on the ground, adequate inclusion – directly or indirectly – of boundary partners with large-scale development ability from research project design to implementation seems needed, and related due diligence and partnership agreements may be some of several suitable indicators that can be used in addition to indicators that track direct project results.

Around the set of early-outcome objectives, FTA needs to establish its own results-based management (RBM) framework, based on a comprehensive theory of change into which the current results framework and impact pathways should evolve. When setting up and operating this framework, care must be taken to ensure its continued alignment with institutional strategies and priorities of all actors involved.

This framework should consist of a series of early outcome targets that are *attributable* to FTA activities and *monitorable* in the sense that their achievement can be tracked by relevant and easy-to-measure indicators that are verifiable, specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. It is for these early linkages in FTA's overall theory of change that rigorous qualitative and quantitative RBM can and should be applied. A focus on early outcome targets can effectively counter project fragmentation and increase program effectiveness by creating synergies between research aligned across projects and over time working towards a common objective.

In addition, the framework should be based on more aggregate and long-term objectives on the level of FTA components (or Flagship Projects) to which early outcome targets should make *plausible contributions*. Performance in meeting these objectives cannot be monitored across the entire FTA research portfolio. Contrariwise, for linkages beyond early outcome targets, the logical coherence and the validity of the assumptions (impact hypotheses) underlying FTA's theory of changes should be critically examined and validated by selected *ex-ante* and *ex-post* impact evaluation, contribution analysis, expert advice, and other methods.

All objectives in FTA's theory of change should be deduced from overall CGIAR objectives, rather than interpreting how present activities cater to these objectives.

In the context of this theory of change, early outcome targets should then be derived top-down and not argued bottom up. They should be logically derived from more aggregate objectives (ultimately from IDOs and SLOs), and reflect identified needs of beneficiaries and



partners. The degree to which conditions for large-scale adoption and application are already in place should also influence the choice of those targets.

Importantly, the overall framework should explicitly allow for two windows of research that cannot be rationalized within a narrowly defined results-based management system, but that nevertheless represent important elements of FTA's present and likely future research portfolio:

- **opportunistic research.** If significant bilateral donor funding is available for research that contributes to overall FTA objectives but not directly to one of the near-outcome targets, a decision must be made. Either, that research is excluded from FTA, reducing the overall bilateral program volume, or that it is mapped to FTA. The RBM framework needs to provide criteria for this decision, and a clear indication how early outcome performance for such opportunistic research is to be monitored if part of FTA;
- **innovative, high-risk research with uncertain results.** In other cases, fundamental research with a strong perceived potential to trigger innovation may be of significant relevance and promise, but is usually hard to fit into a straightforward RBM framework. The importance of such research in view of FTA's upstream research pipeline was highlighted in interviews throughout FTA Centers and the Consortium Office. The Evaluation Team considers it important that an FTA RBM framework explicitly acknowledges such a separate window, and provides a convincing rationale for research placed into it. Requiring creative explanations for how it still contributes to early RBM outcome targets should be avoided as much as allowing this window to harbor research without clear relevance or innovation potential.

Going forward, FTA Participant Institutions, the FTA Lead Center and the Consortium Office and Board should work together towards harmonizing and ensuring continued alignment of their institutional strategies with this results framework and its underlying theory of change, and vice versa.

This framework should then guide priority setting and active research portfolio management by the Steering Committee and the FTA Director. Window 1 and 2 program funds should be allocated in alignment with this framework to finance relevant research directly, or to co-finance suitable bilateral projects. This also entails that greater selectivity needs to be applied when mapping fully, or partly, bilaterally funded projects to FTA, hence, it requires to not predetermine bilateral budgets for FTA's second phase but to drive the work program primarily through results targets. In contrast to some narrow definitions of RBM, resource allocation cannot be solely based on past performance in reaching short-term targets, but should be based on rational decision making involving expert advice,



analysis of the likelihood for uptake, and use of scientific outputs of specific lines of research, comparative advantages of institutions involved and available funding, in addition to past performance in reaching results.

These considerations and recommendations are summarized as follows:

**Recommendation 4. The Evaluation Team recommends that FTA further develops its results framework and impact pathways into a comprehensive theory of change, and a framework for results-based management that explicitly acknowledges windows for opportunistic and blue-sky research. Based on this framework, FTA must then initiate active management of its entire research portfolio, including increased selectivity with regard to mapping bilaterally funded projects to the program.**

**This recommendation is addressed to:**

- the FTA Steering Committee, the FTA Director, and the Lead Center BOT;
- the Consortium Board and Office for inclusion into guidance for FTA during the interim phase (until end of 2016) and for the second CRP call.

**Key points (“must have’s”):**

- FTA’s theory of change is further developed to clarify pathways from research to large-scale adoption and development impact. Underlying assumptions especially regarding boundary partners are clearly stated and verified. Objectives in FTA’s theory of change are deduced from overall CGIAR objectives and from partner needs, rather than interpreting how present activities cater to these objectives and needs.
- The MEIA team is equipped with sufficient capacity to conduct this type of research and impact pathway research is made a FTA research topic
- Development of a two-tier results framework, within and beyond FTA’s sphere of control, based on:
  - a series of early outcome targets *attributable* to FTA activities and *monitorable* in the sense that their achievement can be tracked by relevant and easy-to-measure indicators;
  - aggregate and long-term objectives on the level of FTA components (or Flagship Projects) to which early outcome targets make *plausible contributions*.
- Two windows of research that go beyond a narrowly defined Results-Based Management (RBM) approach are established:
  - Opportunistic research, driven by the availability of significant bilateral donor funding and contributing to overall FTA objectives (but not directly to short-term RBM targets);
  - Innovative, high-risk research that cannot be fit into a results-based logic but that exhibits high relevance and potential for FTA.
- This framework must be developed and maintained in continued alignment with

institutional strategies and priorities of all FTA Participant Institutions.

- This framework guides priority setting and active research portfolio management by the Steering Committee and the FTA Director.
- For FTA's second phase, performance is measured by results. Hence, no fixed bilateral funding shares are predetermined.

Recommendation 4 also provides the mechanism for focus of FTA research activities. Earlier recommendations (recommendations 1 and 2) have increased rather than reduced the areas FTA research is recommended to cover. On the contrary, the introduction of early-outcome targets (recommendation 4) allows concentrating research around a suitable number of those targets in order to keep the overall research activity volume in line with capacities and funding.

**Inclusion of boundary partners.** Chapters 2 through 4 of this report have highlighted the importance, achievements and remaining challenges in ensuring an outcome-orientation in FTA research design and implementation. Overall pressures within and external to the CGIAR towards clearly demonstrating contributions to development results have increased considerably. FTA Participants need to address this requirement within their own comparative advantage, i.e. as research for development institutions, through partnerships and smart design and selection of research opportunities with real-world development potential, rather than attempting to start implementing development projects themselves. Within a strongly results-oriented role, involvement of boundary and large development partners early on in research design and selection is of critical importance. Overall, a good balance between the historical role of supplying findings with the intent to drive development and letting concrete needs of development partners drive the research agenda needs to be found. These considerations are addressed by recommendation 7.

## 5. Cross-cutting Activities

This chapter addresses several themes and types of activities that have relevance not for specific but rather across program components. Over time, terminology and focus for these “cross-cutting activities” – the umbrella term used in this report – has slightly evolved. The FTA Proposal introduced three “cross-cutting themes” (gender, partnerships, and capacity strengthening) and three “program support” functions (communications and knowledge sharing, monitoring and evaluation for impact, and program management). Sentinel Landscapes were introduced separately, but also positioned as reaching across program components. Annual and Progress Reports in 2011-2013 followed an increasingly standardized template, and settled on the four “cross-cutting themes”: Gender, Sentinel Landscapes, communications and MEIA, and treated partnership building and capacity building separately.

Sections 5.1 and 5.2 deal with Sentinel Landscapes and Gender, two cross-cutting activities marked by dedicated program-level activities and staff. A third important cross-cutting activity, MEIA is addressed in Chapter 7 because of its direct relevance to governance and management of FTA. Sections 5.3 through 5.5 address how three further cross-cutting activities are implemented and coordinated across FTA Centers: communications, capacity development, and partnerships. In contrast to the other chapters of this report, recommendations are directly placed into sections.

### 5.1. Sentinel Landscapes

A central feature of FTA is the Sentinel Landscape concept. As described in the FTA Proposal, a Sentinel Landscape is a site or a network of sites, geographically or issue bounded, in which a broad range of biophysical, social, economic and political data are monitored, collected with consistent methods and interpreted over the long term (FTA, 2011, p. 338).

**The concept.** Long-term monitoring of sites or networks of sites is typically used by academic institutions to validate and compare results across differing ecological conditions. For example, the National Science Foundation of the USA started their Long Term Ecological Research (LTER) program in the 1980s to monitor, record and compare critical parameters in ecological systems such as nutrient cycling, biomass and other ecosystem features across a network of sites in the USA. Today, the International Long Term Ecological Research program includes 38 countries worldwide<sup>41</sup>. The Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute of

<sup>41</sup> Information obtained from <http://www.sitemaker.umich.edu/ifri/home>, visited in March 2014.

the USA, through its Center for Tropical Forest Science (CTFS), maintains a network of 50 hectare forest sites across locations in Malaysia, Panama and other tropical countries worldwide to monitor tropical forest dynamics in the long term since the early 1990s<sup>42</sup>. This network comprises today more than 30 forest research plots across the Africa, Americas, Asia and Europe, with a strong focus on tropical regions.

More focused on goals and objectives related to FTA, CATIE has used networks of sites to compare regeneration and productivity of secondary forests in Brazil, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Peru since the 1990s (Montagnini F. et al., 2002).

Finally, within the CGIAR, “Sentinel Sites” have been expressly suggested by the Stripe Review of Social Sciences in the CGIAR in 2009 (CGIAR Science Council, 2009, p. 59). Sentinel Landscapes as conceived by FTA (CGIAR 2011) fulfill three major roles: to record, analyze and alert:

- the first role is documentary, i.e. describing and recording scientific findings and new knowledge, where every relevant item of data is recorded and tracked;
- the second role is explanatory, where information collected contributes to building comprehension of various phenomena. This role is closer to the function of an experimental model which can be used for the measure of a known or supposed dynamic, such as the impact of a policy or a change in commodity prices on poverty alleviation, or on forest conservation. In some cases, such data may be more actively used, for instance in adaptive natural resource management;
- the third role is predictive, typically to inform decision making, through long-term surveillance of thresholds and alert levels. This is the case, for example, of building “vulnerability maps” to be able to predict changes in land use cover across regions.

**Potential of Sentinel Landscapes.** Overall, Sentinel Landscapes hold great promise. The Sentinel Landscapes cross-cutting activity provides FTA researchers with an opportunity to test the most controversial issues in forestry and agroforestry science, for example the replicability of results of forestry and agroforestry interventions. Agroforestry, due to its multiple components, often defies rigorous replication and statistical analyses. Extrapolation of new technologies has often failed, giving agroforestry a reputation for being site-specific in nature (Akininifesi F.K. et al., 2008; Puri, S and Nair, PKR, 2004). The Sentinel Landscapes approach can contribute to remediate this drawback to some extent. For example, agroforestry systems based on permanent crops, such as cacao, can be followed up in terms of productivity, carbon sequestration and biodiversity across the

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<sup>42</sup> Information obtained from <http://www.ctfs.si.edu/>, visited in March 2014.

Sentinel Landscapes sites. Comparisons across locations can lead to models which can be used to predict patterns of change and performance across agroforestry systems.

Once results are generalized and modeled across sites, those models can be used in other geographical locations, and applied to promote desired land use changes, such as the adoption of more sustainable agroforestry systems, or to predict carbon mitigation potential by the promoted and adopted land uses in the areas of concern. This is particularly useful in regions of the world where experiments may involve forest disturbances, such as to explore more sustainable harvest techniques in the Amazon or Congo basins, or, when regions are too remote or conditions are very difficult to carry out experimental research. In those cases models developed in one Sentinel Landscape site can be used, with caution, in other sites.

FTA Component 3 is most closely aligned with the Sentinel Landscapes approach. Component 3 has articulated 12 hypotheses for FTA's Sentinel Landscapes with respect to understanding patterns and drivers of forest transition. These hypotheses relate, for example, to temporal change, spatial patterns and institutional challenges at the forest/non-forest transition. Sentinel Landscapes work is being used by Component 3 to test the scope for using policy instruments (rules, incentives), which vary along the tree cover transition.

All five FTA Components are implemented by multidisciplinary teams researching various elements of the forest transition framework. Using Sentinel Landscapes for at least a portion of the research under each component gives a strong boost to the integration of research across components, and limits the risks of "research silos". Each multidisciplinary team is expected to monitor the selected Sentinel Landscapes to observe key ecological, economic and social processes in order to discern changing patterns of resource availability and use, and welfare outcomes within regional-scale ecosystems, markets and populations. This framework promotes comparative analysis at multiple scales, from intensive studies specific to a single location to national-, ecoregional- and international-level analysis using large-scale samples (e.g. to support global comparative research). This is expected to allow the generation of high-value international public goods (IPGs) when conducted within a robust conceptual framework and research design.

Sentinel Landscapes are expected to allow the collection of the long-term data sets necessary to understand the drivers and impacts of land use change. They also provide excellent locations to foster dialogue among various stakeholders and to test models, thus facilitating consensus on contentious issues such as the sustainable exploitation of natural resources. They also offer opportunities to implement experimental designs to measure the uptake of research results and for overall impact assessment. Finally, Sentinel Landscapes can provide global focal points for multidisciplinary research; they provide spaces for engagement with the broader suite of researchers, development efforts and stakeholders

working in rural areas, including other long-term site-specific research efforts being undertaken within the broader CGIAR network (van Noordwijk, M. et al., 2001).

In summary, the objectives of the Sentinel Landscapes cross-cutting activity are:

1. to work in a coherent set of sites for long-term research where existing data sets and partnerships can be used to monitor the impacts of exogenous and endogenous change at the landscape scale; and
2. to develop and apply field-tested and standardized research protocols to allow global comparative studies of forest transition stages, economic and demographic conditions, and climatic/biophysical determinants of environmental services and livelihood options.

**Implementation.** Currently, Sentinel Landscapes work is coordinated by a small team based at ICRAF. The specific locations and institutions associated with the Sentinel Landscapes cross-cutting activity were determined based on a number of already existing projects and networks associated with FTA Centers<sup>43</sup>. The following set of criteria was used:

- geographically bound area with ecosystems subject to land-use changes (LUC);
- cross institutional team; and
- active partnerships on the ground.

So far, seven Sentinel Landscapes have been chosen, but the list may expand. Five Sentinel Landscapes are geographically defined, covering different ecoregions and two more are issue-bounded.

Overall, it seems that the geographic coverage of Sentinel Landscapes so far is broad enough to suit FTA objectives. The selection of Sentinel Landscape sites has been opportunistic. Instead of choosing “ideal” sites, advantage was taken of existing research sites and collaborative networks, as for example the Central America Sentinel Landscape sites. Based on the current funding situation, the Evaluation Team finds that this was a realistic approach. Against their work plan<sup>44</sup>, somewhat delayed implementation progress has been made and overall results can be characterized as still preparatory in nature, e.g. selection and initial set up activities for the set of sites and agreement on baseline data collection protocols, scope and methodology of data management.

<sup>43</sup> A full report prepared by Erik Meijaard and Douglas Sheil: “Review and Synthesis on Long-Term Experiment Networks” served as conceptual basis for determining criteria for choosing the Sentinel Sites (Meijaard E. and Sheil D., n.d.).

<sup>44</sup> A detailed work plan for Sentinel Landscapes is described in the FTA Proposal (FTA, 2011, p. 262). It has a stepwise approach, depending on funding availability, with activities planned year by year for a total of six years.

From interviews with CATIE and ICRAF researchers, it appears that the Central America Sentinel Landscape with project regions in Nicaragua/Honduras is the most developed Sentinel Landscape site so far, and one which has led in the development of criteria for methodologies for data collection and management. This Sentinel Landscape developed from long-term involvement by CATIE in collaboration with other international and local academic and research organizations, as well as with local farmers, NGOs and local government institutions. Their long record of working together helps effectiveness in several aspects. For example, CATIE researchers can identify local collaborators as needed, who will be willing to get engaged in specific aspects of Sentinel Landscape-related projects. For data management, CATIE and collaborators can rely on their own capacities to ensure quality control and good coordination.

Several Sample Projects studied in more depth by the Evaluation Team have project sites within areas covered by Sentinel Landscapes. Based on those project case studies and further interviews, the Evaluation Team could synthesize several important general challenges regarding Sentinel Landscapes in FTA.

First, there seems to have been considerable negotiation between FTA Centers about the location and focus of individual Sentinel Landscapes, sometimes leading to disagreements and considerable delays. In the Evaluation Team's observation, these negotiations were driven by legitimate but not matching interest of participating institutions to closely integrate their own ongoing research with future Sentinel Landscapes. Or put more plainly: each institution wanted to select Sentinel Landscapes that were most useful for them. This was mirrored by interviewees who felt that the selection of Sentinel Landscape sites was sometimes driven too much by institutional interests rather than FTA partners working together to jointly identifying areas for collaborative, holistic research.

Second, the integration of Sentinel Landscapes with other research appears to be somewhat of a challenge, with only Mekong and Burkina Faso having aligned ongoing FTA projects. Project teams and donors leading ongoing or planned research operating within Sentinel Landscapes have not always been easy to convince to adhere to data collection protocols defined by the FTA Sentinel Landscape Team. Importantly, the link between the Sentinel Landscapes and the different FTA components are not yet fully clear; how will these Sentinel Landscapes create a platform or platforms for more integrated research with the FTA and also beyond the FTA including also possibly other CRPs that are associated e.g. with extra-sectoral drivers of deforestation or with water.

Third, it is apparent to the Evaluation Team that there is a need for strong leadership of Sentinel Landscapes from the scientific point of view to inform and motivate researchers to work more holistically and linking relevant component research. Leadership from the methodological and data management point of view is necessary, nonetheless, there is also



a need for scientific leadership. This leadership could stem from the FTA Director, or from someone working in close coordination with the FTA Director.

Fourth, ensuring dedicated funding for long-term data collection activities, once Sentinel Landscapes have been chosen, has proved difficult until now. It appears challenging to raise long-term financing or financing for countries and areas that don't match current donor priorities. Since Window and 2 FTA funds dedicated to Sentinel Landscapes appear insufficient to guarantee ongoing tracking of even a core set of indicators over a period of many years, these funds are now increasingly used to leverage otherwise financed projects into covering some Sentinel Landscapes-related work. This appears to be considered more promising than applying directly for long-term Sentinel Landscape funding.

The last three issues are also reflected in a 2009 commentary of the CGIAR Science Council on the recommendation to install a series of Sentinel Sites made in the Stripe Review of Social Sciences in the CGIAR (CGIAR Science Council, 2009, p. v): "[...] critical long-term system studies using sentinel sites would require commitment from donors to fund such work and commitment from scientists and management to engage in long-term work to accumulate data, comparisons and experiences."

for Sentinel Landscapes on the donor side has apparently not yet materialized. Unrestricted FTA funds dedicated to Sentinel Landscapes are insufficient to guarantee ongoing tracking of even a core set of indicators over many years. By their very definition, the ecoregional public goods produced by this type of research only materialize if uninterrupted long term data collection under the same protocol is guaranteed. This, in turn, requires sufficient and uninterrupted funding and support. The present set of Sentinel Landscapes is therefore in somewhat of a limbo, attempting to secure bilateral funding or to leverage or piggy-back on other research efforts.

**Recommendation 5. As part of the preparations for FTA's second phase proposal, the Evaluation Team recommends that the FTA Steering Committee re-assesses the relevance and the financial sustainability of the current set of Sentinel Landscapes, and adapt the entire approach to Sentinel Landscapes in the FTA Phase II Proposal accordingly.**

**This recommendation is addressed to:**

- the FTA Steering Committee, the FTA Director, and the Lead Center BOT.

**Key points ("must have's"):**

- Strong scientific leadership is needed in order to increase the researchers' engagement in the pursuit of SL objectives.
- Sentinel Landscapes are integrated into FTA's overall theory of change and FTA research is increasingly associated with these sites.
- "Business cases" are formulated balancing minimal resource and support

requirements (both international and by the host countries) to successfully operate Sentinel Landscapes over a period long enough to generate valuable long-term tracking data and balancing these with realistic assumptions about funding levels and stability and continued support in the CGIAR.

- The FTA Steering Committee, after being restructured (see recommendation 10), reviews the SL concept and operational plans to balance the value of expected results with operational requirements and likely future support.

## 5.2. Gender

### 5.2.1 Gender in CGIAR.

The need for a consistent and coherent integration of gender aspects into research in natural resource management is well documented since more than two decades, and corresponds to donor priorities (Agarwal, 2010, 2009; Cornwall, 2003; Jackson, 1993; Meinzen-Dick R. et al., 2012; Rocheleau D. and Edmunds D., 1997). In the CGIAR, however, Gender has not always been addressed satisfactorily in the past. A 2010 review, assessing evidence on research impacts for the CGIAR as a whole since 2000 *vis-à-vis* its core mission, highlights gender as one of the issues in which CGIAR investments and links to development goals “have not been sufficiently and convincingly demonstrated” (Renkow and Byerlee, 2010, p. 40) and various external reviews provided mixed results on how Gender had been incorporated in FTA Centers’ work.<sup>45</sup>

### 5.2.2 Gender in the FTA research portfolio.

At pre-proposal stage, FTA received positive feedback on how Gender was planned to be treated. A 2010 scoping study aimed to help the CGIAR in its efforts for mainstreaming gender across the CRPs considered that the FTA Proposal integrated Gender in a “original and effective way” into research (Kauck et al., 2010, p. 10). In implementation practice, however, the Evaluation Team obtained rather mixed results. On the one hand, Gender was found to be visibly integrated into only 45 percent of project proposals, while more than half did not really mention Gender at all. In addition, no clear trend towards increased gender mainstreaming in project proposals over time is visible, even not for projects with

<sup>45</sup> The 2007 External Review of the Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis (PRGA) stated that although the program had done some good work mainstreaming gender analysis in NARS especially in Africa, the overall success had remained „limited.“ In consequence the Science Council highlighted the need for more focused research on gender analysis leading to mainstream gender into CGIAR research. The 2006 EPMP of ICRAF highlighted that the Center already included Gender in policy research, the 2007 EPMP for CIFOR recommended increasing the attention to gender at all steps of research, the 2009 EPMP for Bioversity recognized that the center had addressed some gender imbalance and the 2008 EPMP for CIAT highlighted the importance of the recommendations of the PRGA.

start dates in as late as 2013 which is well after FTA had become operational. On the other hand, 14 of 16 sample case studies conducted for this evaluation delivered (or plan to deliver) Gender data in some form, and have any type of gender activities included.

## 5.2.3. The FTA Gender Strategy

The objective of the Gender cross-cutting activity is to integrate gender sensitive research questions and research methods into all components of FTA. This, in turn, is intended to facilitate identifying social elements that enhance gender equity in policy-making, land/resource access and benefit sharing.

A key output of the Gender cross-cutting is the Gender Strategy (CIFOR, 2013b) which responds well to recommendations in the EPMRs as well as those in the 2010 scoping study<sup>46</sup>. The Evaluation Team also finds that the stocktaking of previous experiences in the design of the strategy is a good starting point. The FTA Gender Strategy proposes clear objectives and impact pathways, explains the corresponding approaches, identifies Gender-relevant scientific questions for each FTA component and defines initial indicators for monitoring progress and success (CIFOR, 2013b). Related to the lag of inclusion of Gender at the project-level discussed above, the Evaluation Team acknowledges that traction of FTA's 2013 Gender Strategy may only become visible during 2014. This is supported by the observation that, while in 2011 and 2012 Gender support was delivered *ad-hoc*, involvement of gender teams in project preparation appears to have become more systematic from 2013 onwards.

Although the 2013 FTA Gender strategy does not directly mention the CGIAR strategy on Gender (CGIAR Consortium Board, 2011), it is in line with the first component of the CGIAR strategy about "mainstreaming gender research in the CRPs". Instead, the link with the second component of the CGIAR strategy on Gender that deals with diversity and Gender in the workplace is less clear. The Evaluation Team views the focus on the first component of the CGIAR's strategy on Gender as adequate, since the inclusion of Gender aspects into FTA research is dependent on the type of research being entertained and likely has to be adapted across FTA components. Diversity and Gender in the workplace are, on the other hand, naturally introduced and monitored through the FTA Centers themselves and not via the program. It is through the Centers institutional strategies and policies, operational conditions, and Center "cultures" that the workplace is influenced most. See Section 5.2 for the assessment of FTA's Gender balance at the workplace.

<sup>46</sup> The ICRW Gender Scoping Study in its Annex 4 includes an analytical framework for gender mainstreaming in the CRPs' proposals, which includes 7 compartments: background and priority setting; research and development; work plan and staffing; Gender strategy, budget, monitoring and evaluation; and overall gender mainstreaming.

Three points are of concern in the Gender Strategy and should be better addressed going forward.

- First, the strategy does not sufficiently cover social diversity in a wider manner. Having a cross-cutting issue dealing with “Gender” as a main entry point creates a bias against other social aspects such as ethnicity, age, level of education, which are relevant as well from an overall development perspective. Without reducing the importance of Gender issues, they should be placed into a more balanced perception of the social constraints regarding the use of forest, trees and agroforestry resources. Thus the Evaluation Team concluded that social diversity as an entry point for understanding social capital and social constraints and their role in sustainable use of forests, trees and agroforestry resources, is a missing element. While some relevant social diversity indicators can be found in the Gender strategy or in the methodological guidance for integrating Gender into forestry research (CIFOR, 2013; introduction and p. 11 and Manfre and Rubin, 2012 p. 5, 21, 49, 56, 58), there is however no comprehensive guidance for treating social diversity in a systematic manner, and for clarifying the importance of Gender *vis-à-vis* other social aspects.
- Second, the scalability of Gender findings is not discussed in the strategy. Due to a variety of local determinants related to Gender, findings are not always applicable on a larger scale and not always replicable. The strategy should therefore discuss a way for identifying scalable and non-scalable aspects.
- Third, lessons learned from the System-wide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis (PRGA) seem not to be fully incorporated into the FTA Gender strategy. Since CIAT participates in both programs, the Center could help with clarifying the usefulness of PRGA’s in the context of FTA.

**Organization of work.** Capacities for driving and supporting FTA gender-related work are growing. At the time of the evaluation, the FTA multi-center Gender team was composed of 5 full or part-time staff. Gender Focal Points had been nominated in CIFOR, ICRAF, Bioversity International, and CIAT. In the Evaluation Team’s observations, the group is led competently and effectively. Further, over 100 scientists and partners have been trained. Overall capacity for monitoring the mainstreaming of Gender-related issues however seems to be low both at the level of FTA scientist and implementation partners. This highlights the importance of supporting training in M&E Gender mainstreaming. Such training should be available for a wide group of scientists working on FTA. Communities of Practice have been created, and the Evaluation Team observed a high number of partnerships with Gender-sensitive organizations, especially at the local level. There is a shared conviction of FTA researchers about the importance of working together with partners at different levels, and about the

need (and responsibility) for strengthening their gender-related capacities through research activities, especially for national and local partners. Feedback of such partners was that they felt respected as equal partners. Partner selection seems, however, somewhat opportunistic, and could be linked more clearly to the gender strategy itself.

To date, activities related to mainstreaming Gender into FTA research have been funded from Window 1 and 2 FTA funds and Gender-related work in research projects is funded from the projects themselves. Sufficient continued funding needs to be made available for continuation of Gender mainstreaming work.

**Recommendation 6. The Evaluation Team recommends updating the FTA Gender strategy to better cover social diversity, scalability of findings, and earlier lessons learned. The FTA Steering Committee must monitor the degree to which gender-sensitive research is mainstreamed in FTA and take corrective action if Gender mainstreaming remains stagnant by year-end 2015.**

**This recommendation is addressed to:**

- the FTA Steering Committee, the FTA Director, and the FTA Gender team.

**Key points (“must have’s”):**

- The Gender strategy is updated with respect to a stronger inclusion of social diversity, scalability of gender-related findings, and incorporation of lessons learned from the Systemwide Program on Participatory Research (PRGA).
- Gender mainstreaming is monitored among other by tracking the share of new research proposals with explicit elements of gender-sensitive research in their work plans and objectives. If no significant improvement of Gender coverage in FTA research is evident by year-end 2015, the Steering Committee oversees a thorough review of underlying issues and takes follow-up action.

## 5.3. Partnerships

This section focuses on partnerships between FTA Participant Institutions and other organizations. FTA-internal partnerships between its participants are covered in Chapters 3 (Relevance) and 7 (Governance and Management).

Partnerships feature very prominently in the FTA Proposal and in FTA progress and annual reports. The FTA Proposal introduces three principal partner categories:

- **Research Partners** are science-oriented organizations that participate directly in the formulation and implementation of the CRP6 research agenda;

- **Policy and Practitioner Partners** are development-oriented organizations that are the immediate and intermediate clients for research results in impact pathways; and
- **Knowledge-sharing Partners** are organizations oriented to communications and/or capacity building that can help translate research results into accessible knowledge and extend it to larger scale target audiences. All partners form and contribute to the knowledge-sharing community.

At the level of individual projects, established partnerships appear generally well-justified, and clearly add value compared to the implementing FTA Participant Institutions working alone. An important synergy is the fact that each FTA Participant Institution brings to the table different types of established partnerships. CIFOR, for example, appears well networked in the global policy arena, and entertains strong relationships to national policy-makers and the key actors surrounding them. ICRAF adds to this on the global and regional level through its well-developed networks. In addition, ICRAF entertains good country-level contacts with NARES and other national players, including policy makers and sub-national contacts. ICRAF also has extensive experience in working in the field with smallholders and SMEs. Bioversity also has several FTA-oriented networks, including three regional ones on Forest Genetic Resources - LAFORGEN in Latin America, SAFORGEN in Sub-Saharan Africa and APFORGEN in Asia Pacific - as well as on cacao and coconut.

Within an increased focus on outcomes, FTA researchers have begun to identify relevant boundary partners for each FTA Component that largely overlap with the second and third of the above partnership categories. However, for upstream policy-influencing pathways, the Evaluation Team suggests to extend the second definition slightly also to include the policy-making individuals and institutions themselves and the key actors that surround and influence them. For downstream adoption pathways, existing in-country capacities should be more strongly involved, e.g. NARS and their extension systems, both in the agricultural and forestry sectors. In addition, the private sector should be explicitly included as well.

While the FTA Proposal itself lists an impressive number of exemplary partners, largely covering the suggested extended definitions above, little central attention to how this complex network of relationship and partnership building is driven, coordinated and managed for FTA as a program was visible to the Evaluation Team. FTA could not, for example, provide a comprehensive list of existing boundary partners. The Evaluation Team is therefore concerned that the implementation of FTA research along impact pathways, with a focus on development outcomes, is still in a nascent stage.

Of equal concern is the fact that FTA, as a program, has remained largely unknown to other large institutional players. In its proposal, FTA envisages to embed itself into the complex overall system contributing to development in the context of forests, trees, and agroforestry (FTA, 2011, p. 200):



“Research is one small part of the large complex of interacting processes and actors that determine how natural and social systems function. Multiple local stakeholders, national governments, NGOs and other civil society organizations (CSOs), development banks, private sector companies and international conservation and development agencies all play their roles. Moreover, CGIAR research is just one part of the larger research universe. Universities, government research agencies, NGOs, private researchers and a range of other international research organizations address related issues. The success of CRP6 therefore requires a careful assessment of our role within this larger universe and the creation of effective partnerships that will ensure impact and maximize scarce resources.”

The FTA Evaluation Team supports this clearly formulated recognition of the realistic role FTA can play and the critical requirement of firmly embedding FTA into a network of partnerships, which ensure improved performance of the entire network and is not simply focused on isolated, linear delivery of outputs and early outcomes by FTA and its participating institutions. As mentioned earlier in this report, in interviews with 20 international and regional institutions of strategic importance for FTA, the very existence of FTA was largely unknown.

This issue needs to be urgently addressed. In promoting FTA as a program to those institutions, it is important to not create a false impression of FTA “replacing” its Centers and non-CGIAR partners, but rather to highlight the integrative function FTA provides in aligning and coordinating the work of its constituting institutions.

Lastly, the Evaluation Team notes that donors are not included into FTA’s partnership framework. While FTA Participant Institutions entertain separate relationships to their bilateral donors, no program-level relationship between FTA and its Window 2 donors seems to exist. It seems of utter importance to work towards further alignment of all FTA donors and to rally further program-level support.

Therefore, together with the Consortium and/or Fund Office, FTA should convene its major donors, i.e. its principal bilateral donors, the group of Window 2 donors contributing to FTA, and major Window 1 donors, in order to inform those managing bilateral and CGIAR grants within donor agencies of the synergies through closer integration of bilaterally funded projects with FTA framework and to rally overall support for FTA.

**Recommendation 7. The Evaluation Team recommends that FTA increases and makes more systematic its efforts to reach out to and involve partners on all levels: program donors, relevant actors of strategic importance for FTA, and boundary partners. FTA must further increase its efforts to include boundary partners into research priority setting, design, and implementation, develop their capacity, and ensure that FTA results targets respond to concrete needs of development partners.**



## **This recommendation is addressed to:**

- the FTA Steering Committee and the FTA Director.

## **Key points (“must have’s”):**

- FTA convenes a joint meeting of (or otherwise works towards aligning) its Window 2 and principal Window 1 donors and principal bilateral donors to increase programmatic coherence and to rally overall program funding.
- FTA develops and implements an action plan to identify, reach out to, and identify the concrete needs of partners of strategic importance and key boundary partners for FTA research as a basis for further driving an outcome-oriented approach to research (recommendation 3). Care is taken to remain strategic in partner selection in view of the growing number of partnerships.
- FTA ensures that critical capacities of key boundary partners are developed to enable successful uptake of FTA research.
- In promoting FTA to its partners it is important to not create a false impression of FTA “replacing” its Centers and non-CGIAR partners but rather to highlight the integrative function FTA provides in aligning and coordinating the work of its constituting institutions

## 5.4. Capacity Development

Capacity Development plays an important role throughout FTA. Capacity constraints and gaps are widespread among FTA boundary partners, who have also expressed this repeatedly to the Evaluation Team in interviews.

Among the three Centers most invested in FTA, ICRAF demonstrated the most advanced and established approach to capacity development. Recently, ICRAF has updated its approach to capacity development, as summarized in a comprehensive strategy (World Agroforestry Centre, 2013). The ICRAF Capacity Development Unit builds its approach around “androgogy”, i.e. the science of adult learning. It focuses on working adults (e.g. professional agroforesters, foresters, farmers) with capacity development needs that differ considerably from academic training based on university-style curricula, and that require different access and knowledge transfer modalities. ICRAF entertains two principal capacity development channels. First, a student and graduate program for research at the Center. ICRAF’s capacity development support unit has developed an online process flow system and assists in the selection of adequate supervisors with both scientific and coaching skills, and across the entire process cycle. Second, the unit supports (but does not implement) various project-level capacity development activities. This also follows a due process: first, a pragmatic capacity development needs/gap assessment is conducted, then assistance is

provided in planning the capacity interventions and, finally, an evaluation of the interventions is conducted. Along the second channel, projects request and pay for capacity development – the central ICRAF unit simply supports this. As of now, no stand-alone capacity development activities were entertained by the unit, but, for example, trainings for reviewers of scientific publications are considered a useful stand-alone idea. ICRAF's earlier technical capacity building capacities were spun off in the 1990s as a self-sustaining NGO (African Network for Agriculture and Forestry Education) that continues to be housed at ICRAF and is, among other, contracted by ICRAF projects to provide capacity development services to ICRAF.

While addressing capacity development in its earlier strategies, CIFOR is only now in the process of operationalizing a central approach to capacity development. Current projects are pretty much on their own with designing, implementing and evaluating capacity development interventions since no professional support structure as in ICRAF is in place. CIFOR considers inclusion of national staff into projects as an important element of developing capacities. Interviewees expressed more satisfaction with results at the lower level of the capacity building pyramid up to the level of PhDs, but felt that it was difficult to keep senior staff in their academic positions because of the volatility in funding.

Bioversity International's approach to capacity development builds on that of ICRAF; the head of the capacity development unit has previously worked at ICRAF's office in Bogor, located on CIFOR's campus and is thus well connected to both Centers. Bioversity International is in the process of developing a capacity development strategy which currently is in a draft stage. A key difficulty is the fragmentation of work along ten CRPs that Bioversity is involved in, making it difficult for the capacity development unit to provide adequate support to all projects. In contrast to ICRAF, the capacity development support unit is not financed centrally, but rather through charging time to different CRPs.

Overall, capacity development appears to be managed strictly Center by Center in FTA. However, in the Evaluation Team's perception there is significant unexplored potential for cross-Center fertilization regarding capacity development approaches and support procedures, and for generating significant programmatic synergies for delivering capacity development support to projects, especially towards important boundary partners exhibiting critical capacity gaps (see recommendation 7).

## 5.5. Communications

FTA's approach to communication separates research communication from public awareness communication. While the former is in the hands of scientists, and paid for directly from research funds, the latter is managed and funded separately.

The communication model for FTA was developed in collaboration with the communication directors of the principal participating Centers, and highlights that each Center has complementary but unique communication assets, such as writing and strategy teams with different experience, messages and audiences.

FTA Centers focus on different levels regarding FTA-related communications. Over the past years, CIFOR has evolved into what is now considered a center of excellence regarding global and national communications. CIFOR mostly works at a press level to reach policy-makers in order to influence national and international policies, while ICRAF communications have more focus on the farm-to country level.

The coordinating role for communications was assigned to CIFOR which seems suitable in view of its overall communications expertise. Specific areas of responsibility of the FTA CIFOR-led communication support unit are:

- planning, monitoring and reporting, which includes amongst other, coordinating and managing the input of CRP-FTA into CG-wide communication efforts and platforms, developing and managing the program's web presence, and monitoring all outreach efforts from the program (including all CRP-FTA publications and journal articles);
- support to components and other units in establishing appropriate strategies and tools translate research results into accessible knowledge, and extend it to larger scale target audiences;
- knowledge sharing with and among the communication teams and networks of partners; and
- marketing and outreach for the program (coordinating conferences and events, press releases, press conferences, contacts with media, etc.).

Within FTA, each Participant Institution is responsible for communicating its own research findings. This includes writing, editing and publishing of component level research outputs – books, publications, journal articles, and other publications.

The Evaluation Team observed close collaboration between the four FTA Centers in various respects such shared blogging, cross-posting and promotion of each other's' publications, journal articles, blog stories and press releases. FTA Centers also jointly participate in conferences and workshops, for example, the 2013 Global Landscapes Forum in Warsaw.

Regarding its online presence, FTA launched a new standalone FTA website in February 2014 in order to strengthen the program's identity. The new website is de-branded to increase inclusiveness and to attract more users. The content for the website is being populated and curated by each of the FTA Centers. Before that website was launched, FTA's main online presence was embedded on a dedicated web page into CIFORs web presence, the structure

of which was also replicated to other Centers' websites. CIFOR itself enjoys intense and quickly increasing web traffic with close to 350 000 unique visitors in 2012 and, in the first six months of 2013 alone, some 400 000 downloads of FTA publications. Across all FTA Centers, scientists have posted more than 200 blog entries in the first six months of 2013 alone, to promote the program's outputs and key messages are posted in FTA Centers' blogs.

The CGIAR Consortium Office also maintains a web page dedicated to FTA directly associated with its main landing page (CGIAR.org). CIFOR curates content from FTA Participant Institutions to this site each week. The latter page also includes a link to Forests News, CIFOR's blog.

All four Centers make extensive use of the most popular social media tools to promote the program's outputs. The program, through the Centers, is present on Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, Flickr, and Slideshare.

The Evaluation Team commends CIFOR and strong leadership on FTA communications and encourages the continuation of the present branding strategy: presentation of FTA as a CGIAR program and of FTA Participant Institutions as partners in that program.

However, from some interviews conducted with country partners, in several cases it was remarked that country-level communications both for FTA as a whole and for specific lines of research could be strengthened. While considered good in some countries, in other countries partners felt not sufficiently informed and reached out to. Solutions to this include working more closely with national partners and using them and their networks as communication channels, and to better integrate with national research, educational and extension organizations. From the Evaluation Team's observations, CIRAD has been generally successful in immersing its researchers into host institutions which allows employing the communication channels of those institutions more effectively. IRD has adopted a similar approach.

## 6. Effectiveness and Efficiency of Institutional Arrangements

This chapter summarizes and assesses several critical support functions of FTA.

First, financial performance is assessed, covering resource mobilization, expenditure against budget, and several topics related to financial health. Then, FTA-related reporting and the management of financial and other project-related information are analyzed, and third, the way in which FTA-related human resource management is coordinated by FTA Participant Institutions is assessed. Fourth, the performance of CIFOR in its roles as fiduciary and legal agent, and as host of the FTA Management Support Unit is considered. The chapter closes with conclusions and recommendations.

### 6.1. Financial Performance

#### 6.1.1. Budget and Resource Mobilization Performance

FTA maintained its original budget throughout its lifetime, but shifted the program by half a year from January to July 2011. Hence, the 2011 budget is exactly half of the first year's FTA Proposal budget, the 2012 budget is composed of half of the year 1 and half of year 2 Proposal budget, and so forth. The resulting annual FTA budgets are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4. FTA Annual Budget in USD million (FTA, 2011).**

	2011 (July- December)	2012	2013	2014 (January - June)	Total
Window 1 and 2	13	28	33	17	90
Bilateral (including Window 3)	21	45	50	26	142
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>233</b>
Share of Window 1 and 2	37%	38%	39%	40%	39%

**Bilateral resource mobilization.** Fundraising performance is usually assessed by comparing budget targets with actually mobilized resources. In the case of FTA, such an assessment is not entirely meaningful because of two reasons:

- projects mapped partially or fully to FTA appear to be pitched largely as Center projects and not as FTA projects to bilateral donors. Hence, bilateral funds mapped

to FTA essentially measure the Centers' own institutional resource mobilization performance, weighted by the degree to which projects are mapped to FTA;

- a further technical difficulty is— related to the above — that there are little obligations of a recipient Center towards the bilateral donor to actually assign the project to FTA. This provides FTA Participating Centers with considerable freedom — provided that the project does contribute to FTA objectives — to map bilateral projects fully, partially, or not at all to FTA. While mapping at ICRAF is done at proposal stage and confirmed at grant agreement stage, mapping at CIFOR is sometimes done only at the time — and to the extent — actual project expenses are incurred (see Section 6.3).

Therefore, the Evaluation Team opted to characterize major donors to FTA and to, separately, describe the overall, not-FTA-specific, fundraising performance of FTA Centers.

Table 5 provides an overview over FTA's most important bilateral donors, as measured by the bilateral project expenditures under FTA charged to those donors.

Overall, the Evaluation Team identified more than 90 individual donors<sup>47</sup>. The top five bilateral donors — the European Union/Commission, Mars Inc., Norway, Australia and the USA — represent half of the overall financial volume. About 80 percent of overall bilateral expenditures were charged to the top 15 bilateral donors. Within those top 15, three donors are not CGIAR Fund Donors: Mars Inc., Germany, and IDH/The Sustainable Trade Initiative, which together represent a quarter of the volume in that group.

As visible in Table 6, CIFOR and ICRAF have enjoyed rapid growth of their bilateral revenues — on average with more than 10 percent per year — over past years, while Bioversity International's bilateral revenue has stagnated until 2010 and then substantially declined. CIAT has enjoyed overall moderate bilateral growth. When interpreting these numbers, it is important to keep the degree to which Centers are invested in FTA in mind: very high for CIFOR and ICRAF, moderate for Bioversity and marginal for CIAT<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> This was done by grouping together expenditure data from different projects for each donor. In isolated cases, this may lead to inaccuracies since donor name entries were not always entirely conclusive and some of the organizations indicated are, in turn, financed by other donors.

<sup>48</sup> In terms of their overall 2012 expenditures, FTA-related expenditures represented 98 percent for CIFOR, 62 percent for ICRAF, 17 percent for Bioversity, and 1 percent for CIAT.

**Table 5. Top 15 Bilateral FTA Donors, as measured by FTA-related expenditures in 2012 and 2013.**

Rank	Donor	Expenditure mapped to FTA in 2012 and 2013 in USD million	Also Fund Donor? <sup>49</sup>	If Fund Donor, which Window? <sup>50</sup>		
				W1	W2	W3
1	European Union/Commission	9.5	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Mars Inc.	9.5	No			
3	Norway	8.5	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>		
4	Australia	5.9	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	USA	5.9	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
6	International Fund for Agricultural Development	4.7	Yes			<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Canada	3.8	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Finland	3.1	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Germany	3.0	No			
10	Belgium	2.6	Yes		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	African Development Bank	2.1	No			
12	France	1.3	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>		
13	IDH (sustainable trade initiative)	1.2	No			
14	Ireland	1.1	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
15	Denmark	1.1	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>		

**Table 6. Overall bilateral revenues (in USD million) and average growth rates in the four FTA Centers.**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	CAGR <sup>51</sup>
Bioversity international	21	21	21	19	13	-10%
CIAT	34	35	43	34	40	4%
CIFOR	11	14	15	19	18	13%
ICRAF	18	21	27	27	30	14%

<sup>49</sup> Information obtained from Fund Council Website, <http://www.cgiarfund.org/FundDonors>, visited in March 2014.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Cumulated Average Growth Rate (CAGR) is the constant average annual growth rate that would lead to the same overall growth.



CIFOR, ICRAF and CIAT appear to have been in the comfortable position of having a large and growing bilateral project portfolio from which projects could be mapped to FTA. Bioversity International, on the other hand, was not able to raise bilateral funds correspondingly. This reflects partly a historical trend. Already in the FTA Proposal, Bioversity was budgeted with the lowest relative bilateral contribution among FTA Centers: across Centers, CIFOR is budgeted with a Window 1 and 2 share of 34 percent, ICRAF with 28 percent, Bioversity with 54 percent and CIAT with 7 percent<sup>52</sup>, respectively. With increasing difficulties in bilateral fundraising in 2012 and 2013, Bioversity is under additional pressure to provide for a significant bilateral share in FTA.

In interviews, but also reflected in discussion in the FTA Steering Committee, the idea of FTA Participant Institutions having to provide a certain “leverage ratio” was floated. In the Evaluation Team’s view, any fixed ratio of Window 1 and 2 to bilateral budgets across all FTA Participant Institutions does not do justice to potential intrinsic difficulties in raising bilateral funds for different purposes. The Evaluation Team also perceives such a fixed ratio to contradict one important function of programmatic Window 1 and 2 FTA funds, i.e. of compensating lack of bilateral donor interest for otherwise highly relevant areas of research.

All four FTA Centers have dedicated units for resource mobilization that naturally focus on mobilizing bilateral, project-level resources for the Center. Based on interviews conducted in those units<sup>53</sup>, with Participating Center DGs and members of FTA Centers’ Boards of Trustees, the intensity of bilateral fundraising activities for all four Participating Centers appears to have been purposefully increased over the last years, driven by two issues:

- a strong perception of the Center BOTs that a high dependency on Window 1 and 2 funds represents a risk to the Center. Interviewees mentioned unpredictably changing Consortium policies, prolonged uncertainty about funding levels, delayed disbursements and the interruption of funding to all Centers in the aftermath of an investment-related incident at one non-FTA Center as reasons for this perceived risk;
- the perceived value-add, again from a Center perspective, associated with programmatic FTA fundraising has remained limited. The Evaluation Team could not detect any conviction in Center staff that joint Window 2 resource mobilization would – through higher overall financial volume, increased likelihood for success, or any other mechanism – represent a preferable resource mobilization strategy.

<sup>52</sup> It should be noted that the FTA Proposal included a budget gap, i.e. funds not yet confirmed or raised, and that it has been assumed that these funds were to exclusively be raised from non-Window 1 and 2 funding sources. CIAT’s share of Window 1 and 2 funding is calculated on the basis of relatively small absolute figures.

<sup>53</sup> CIAT’s resource mobilization unit was not interviewed.

These trends are a reason for concern as they counter efforts to increase FTA's Window 1 and 2 programmatic funds. The Evaluation Team is of the opinion that several years of stable and reliable operation are required to rebuild trust, and to reduce the currently perceived need of Centers to manage dependency on Window 1 and 2 funds, and to demonstrate the value-added of FTA to FTA Participant Institutions (see Chapter 8).

**Mobilization of resources from Windows 1 and 2.** Mobilization of Window 1 and 2 resources for FTA have largely been in the hands of the Fund Council and the Consortium Board. Window 1 resources are allocated to CRPs by the Fund Council, based on recommendations by the Consortium Board. Window 2 resources are allocated to CRPs by donors themselves. Until now, commitments from Windows 1 and 2 have been fully met by the Fund Council, albeit with sometimes considerable delays in disbursements. In 2013, 66 percent of the Window 1 and 2 FTA budget for that year was disbursed but the remainder is expected.

FTA's five Window 2 donors have contributed a total of USD 18.7 million, representing 29 percent of all Window 1 and 2 FTA resources paid out in 2011-2013 and 21 percent of the entire Window 1 and 2 budget of FTA. Window 2 donors are, in the order of the size of their contributions: the Netherlands (with USD 8.2 million from 2011-2013), Belgium (USD 4.3 million), Switzerland (USD 3.2 million), Finland (USD 1.9 million) and Australia (USD 1.1 million).

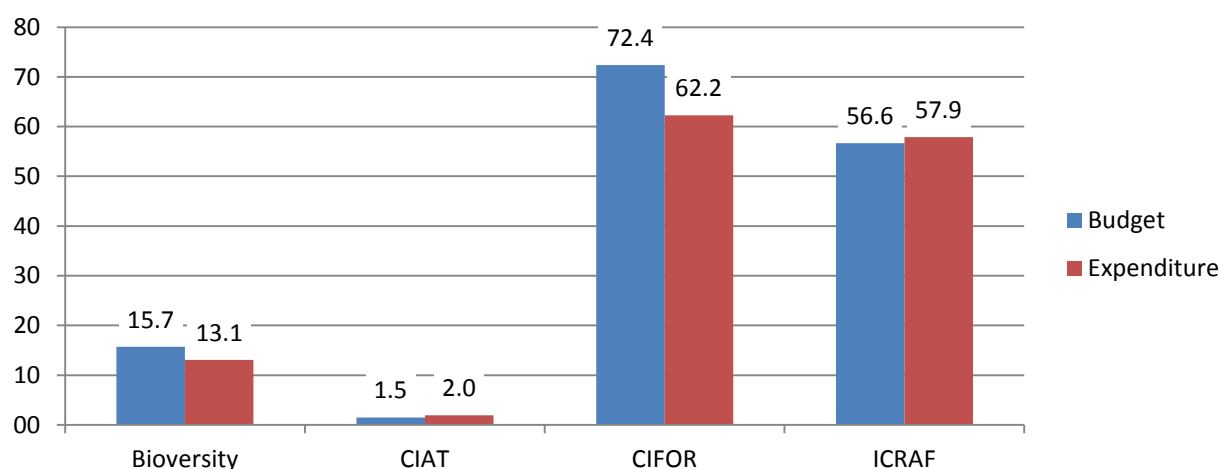
It should be noted that all five Window 2 donors are also contributing to FTA as bilateral donors and most (all but Belgium) also as Window 1 donors.

## 6.1.2. Implementation Performance (Expenditure against Budget)

Overall, FTA demonstrates slightly delayed expenditures with respect to its budgets. In its first 2 years, from program start (01 July 2011) to 30 June 2013, FTA has expended 92 percent of its USD 146 million budget for that period, leaving USD 11 million unspent.

Across Centers, Bioversity International was the slowest spender, expending 83 percent of its budget in that period (Figure 6) while CIAT and ICRAF were fastest, expending 133 and 102 percent of its FTA budget share. Due to the fact that most of the FTA budget consists of bilateral project funds, CIAT and ICRAF do not overspend Window 1 and 2 program funds in the classical sense, but have rather been faster than originally planned in raising and mapping bilateral project funds to FTA. At the same time, "underspending" does not refer to budgets not expended, but rather to bilateral fund that have not materialized (and hence have not been spent) as planned. It should be noted that Figure 6 allocates all non-component budgets and expenditures to CIFOR, even if partly passed on to other Centers.

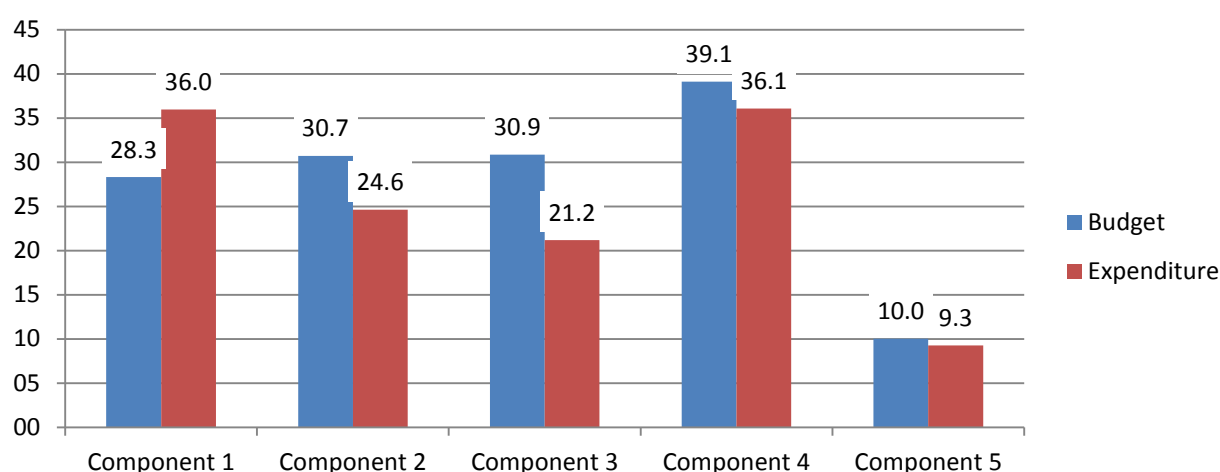
**Figure 6. Spending against budget for the first 2 years of FTA across Centers. In USD million.**



Overall under-spending reflects 13 percent of the overall 2013 budget and corresponds to an implementation delay of less than 2 months which seems surprisingly small as receipt of FTA Window 1 and 2 funds show considerable delays.

Across components, as shown in Figure 7, Component 1 demonstrates expenditures exceeding its budget considerably (127 percent of the budget), driven by more bilateral project volume than planned. Component 3 shows slowest spending against budget (69 percent). Overall, in its first two years, FTA has expended 91 percent of its USD 139 million component budget for this period.

**Figure 7. Spending against budget for the first 2 years of FTA across components. In USD million.**



### 6.1.3. Financial Health

**Timeliness of disbursements.** Regarding Window 1 and 2 funds, disbursements have lagged behind budgets. The first disbursement of Window 1 and 2 FTA funds was received in November 2011, after FTA had been operational for four months, and the remaining 13 percent of the 2011 budget was received in May of the subsequent year. In 2012, 92 percent of the 2012 budget was disbursed, albeit 36 percent only 10 days before the end of that year (and the remainder in February of the next year). In 2013, only 66 percent of the full 2013 FTA budget was paid out. Overall, Window 1 and 2 program budgets have lagged behind budgets, both intra- and inter-yearly. More importantly, there appears to be no trend towards more timely payment over the years.

In interviews, FTA Center staff and BOT members have also expressed that Window 1 and 2 payments at full volume had not been considered certain, and that risk scenarios for partly defaulting Window 1 and 2 contributions had been entertained. This represents a contradiction to what the reform intends, and there is a great need to ensure increased predictability and reliability of Window 1 and 2 FTA program resources.

Because of reasons mentioned earlier in this section, the Evaluation Team has not been able to assess the timeliness of FTA-related bilateral disbursements. From general experience in the CGIAR, it is however assumed that, at times, also those grants are paid out after expenses have already been incurred.

**Cost recovery.** Window 1 and 2 funds cover all indirect costs incurred by FTA Centers. Bilateral grants, however, often require additional financing for full cost recovery. The Evaluation Team has estimated the average cost recovery rate per FTA Center, based on the weighted average over agreed overhead rates of bilateral grants, and compared it to the Centers' audited indirect cost rates, as indicated in Table 7<sup>54</sup>.

**Table 7. Average indirect cost rate agreed in bilateral FTA grants by FTA Center, Center indirect cost rates, and resulting gap.**

	Average indirect cost rate of FTA bilateral grants in percent	Center indirect cost rate in 2012 in percent	Average cost recovery gap in percent
Bioversity international	8	18	10
CIAT	11	16	5
CIFOR	11	24	13
ICRAF	8	15	7

<sup>54</sup> Whereas indirect cost rates of Centers are calculated and audited according to standardized CGIAR financial guidelines, budget line items for indirect costs for bilateral grants differ between donors.

The mismatch between the FTA Centers' indirect cost rates and the average indirect cost rates agreed for bilateral projects result in significant gaps. However, real gaps are likely to be lower than the ones indicated in Table 7, since in many cases there is some room for allocating some budget elements to direct costs that would otherwise be accounted for as indirect cost.

In view of an overall bilateral 3-year FTA budget of USD 143 million, an average 5 percent gap in each Center would translate into USD 7 million co-financing need to ensure full cost recovery, and an overall 10 percent gap would require USD 14 million.

In interviews, FTA's Window 1 and 2 funds were described as the main source for this type of co-financing. While no exact figures for the amount of co-financing for the purpose of full cost recovery (as opposed to co-financing of parts of a project) were available, the Evaluation Team estimates a value between these two examples, resulting in somewhere between 8 and 16 percent of FTA's Window 1 and 2 funds used to recover costs not covered under FTA bilateral grant agreements.

To the Evaluation Team, this situation is reminiscent of the situation before the CGIAR reform, when attempts were made to rid the CGIAR of so-called "free riders," i.e. donors issuing bilateral grants that require cross-financing by donors providing less restricted funds in order to be financially sustainable for Centers. The otherwise influential 2009 Stripe Review of Social Sciences in the CGIAR recommended plainly: "Scarce unrestricted resources must not be used to subsidize restricted funding projects. [...]"

The need to cross-recover indirect costs for bilateral grants seems also to stretch Centers' rights and responsibilities in the Consortium Constitution. The latter states (Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers, 2011, p. 14):

"Member Centers retain their right to secure bilateral funding, provided that such funding should, in all but exceptional cases, include full recovery of the respective Member Center's costs for the funded activities, in accordance with established Consortium policies on cost recovery."

**Leverage.** The term "leveraging" has frequently surfaced during interviews. In the context of FTA, the term "leverage" is used in two different situations: to describe the necessity to co-finance bilaterally-funded projects because, otherwise, they would not recover all indirect costs associated with them, and to describe the ratio between Window 1 and 2 and bilateral funds assigned by a Center to FTA. In both cases, this terminology is inappropriate because it sells a disadvantage as an advantage and hides important shortcomings.

In the case of "leveraging" bilateral projects, the underlying problem is a combination of i) the inability of some bilateral project donors to provide full cost recovery in their grants and, ii) of a potential perception by some donors that current indirect cost rates in Centers

are too high. Both are issues that need to be addressed. Moreover, any notion that this type of co-financing is *causing* important research is likely to be wrong. Bilateral donors are under pressure to disburse their funds and are likely to find other, similarly productive investment opportunities. The Evaluation Team finds that, while being aware of communication pressures in grantee-to-grant-recipient relationships, this type of co-financing should be called by its name, i.e. to pay for incomplete cost recovery in projects. In this way, an unsatisfactory *status quo* is neither justified nor cemented. On the contrary, a very different type of co-financing is of strategic importance: shared projects between two donors or between FTA and a bilateral donor, in which each side pays for a part of the project, including cost recovery within the respective shares.

In the case of Window 1 and 2 to bilateral budget and expenditure ratios, the term “leverage” is equally misleading. Factually, Window 1 and 2 budget components currently have little causal or directional effect on the bilateral project portfolios of FTA Participant Institutions. It is also not in the long-term interest of the CGIAR to create additional incentives to raise bilateral funds at the expense of Window 1 and 2 contributions for FTA as a whole. Lastly, Window 1 and 2 funds are also intended to cover areas in which bilateral funds are hard to raise, for example for Sentinel Landscapes.

**Center reserves.** The need to pre-finance research and restrictions imposed on Window 1 and 2 funds with respect to building up reserves put pressure on FTA Centers’ short-term financial buffers. Overall however, it seems that FTA Centers have been able to manage this situation reasonably well. While the Evaluation Team has not attempted to identify from what sources reserves were built, Table 8 shows that operational reserves have stayed above a 120 days’ benchmark for CIFOR and ICRAF and have steadily increased for Bioversity International and CIAT.

**Table 8. FTA Center operational reserves from 2008 to 2013 (from audited financial statements in the Centers’ annual reports).**

	2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		2013	
	USD million	Days	USD million	Days	USD million	Days	USD million	Days	USD million	Days	USD million	Days
Bioversity I.	8.39	81	8.09	82	9.1	90	9.8	100	10.4	104	11.1	108
CIAT		39	2.6	56	2.84	84	2.91	83	3.38	99	19.9	105
CIFOR	11.3	176	12.5	175	14.8	190	16.7	191	24	237 <sup>55</sup>	25.3	120
ICRAF	18.8	178	20.4	165	25.6	199	26.8	194	27	155	27.11	138

<sup>55</sup> According to the CGIAR Financial report 2012, the increase was due to DFID unrestricted funding going into reserves (the funds have been designated for future use).

**Indirect cost rates.** The indirect cost rate of FTA as a program has not been determined by the Evaluation Team, since no established indirect cost accounting policies exist for CRPs as of yet.

In any case, the indirect cost rates of FTA Centers themselves are however important drivers for FTA overheads. These are summarized in Table 9.

**Table 9. FTA Center indirect cost rates (in percent), as found in audited financial statements.**

	2010	2011	2012	2013
Bioversity International	17	18	18	18
CIAT	12	15	16	15
CIFOR	28	20	24	not yet available
ICRAF	19	15	15	not yet available

The Evaluation Team has not conducted any financial analysis of these overhead rates. Overall decreasing trends for CIFOR and ICRAF seem in line with the rapid growth those Centers have enjoyed between 2010 and 2013.

It is worth noting that the Finance Directors of the CRP-FTA Centers have agreed on a “zero overhead rule” on all performance subcontracts between participating FTA Centers.

## 6.2. Reporting

FTA has two basic sets of reporting requirements: those towards the Consortium Board and Office, on program progress made, and to each of its bilateral project donors, on progress of those projects.

### 6.2.1. Reporting to the Consortium Board and Office

For 2011, FTA provided the Consortium Board and Office with an Annual Report. In 2012, two semi-annual “Traffic Light Reports” were produced, which answered to FTA-internal reporting needs and were inspired by a similar reporting framework used by a peer CRP (CCAFS). The traffic light reports go into considerable detail on the level of FTA output targets, as defined in FTA’s results framework. In its analysis of progress on that level, Section 6.2 drew on those reports. In addition, a comprehensive 2012 Progress Report was prepared along a Consortium template. This report was also condensed into a shorter Annual Report. For subsequent years, a similar reporting format as for 2012 is expected. The Evaluation Team was also provided with a draft version of FTA’s 2013 Annual Report.



Each year, FTA also prepares a Plan of Work and Budget (PoWB), for approval by the Consortium Board. The PoWB of any one year represents the first year in FTA's 3 year rolling operational plans. This first year is fixed and approved by the FTA Steering Committee, while further years remain indicative.

When FTA started, it appears that there was little guidance on the substance and the modalities for CRP reporting. Over time, this guidance was developed and adapted by the Consortium Board and Office, introducing new terminology and concepts. For example, in 2013, the Corporate Services section of the Consortium Office introduced a slightly simplified planning format and standardized terminology in the context of the One Corporate System (OCS). This led to incoherence between the 2012 and 2013 traffic light and progress reports. There is, for example, no clear procedure in place for following up on output targets not achieved in 2012, since corresponding categories do not exist in 2013. In a similar vein, the introduction of the concept of Flagship Projects and Clusters of Activities from 2014 onwards is likely to lead to further discontinuities. While understandable in an emerging system, these evolving reporting and planning standards do represent serious challenges in tracking past performance and create extra burden for the staff.

Another difficulty in progress reporting stems from the fact that bilaterally funded FTA projects appear primarily managed as Center projects, and their mapping to FTA is sometimes only hard and fast once expenses have been occurred, as explained in Section 6.3 below. This leads to the challenge of formulating explicit targets without knowing what projects will be available to provide them. This challenge is evident especially on the level of output targets that require high degrees geographical, thematic, and temporal detail. From the observations of the Evaluation Team, the reported substantial degree of output-targets not fully achieved (see Section 4.2) can be explained by the fact that output targets may simply not fit projects mapped at a later stage to FTA.

Finally, the collection of project outputs achieved may also be considered as an issue. Currently, no FTA-wide automated tracking is installed and no clear procedures for ensuring the alignment of reported outputs with intended output categories is in place. In a very limited *ad hoc* verification of several random reported output indicators, the Evaluation Team could establish several inconsistencies. These issues directly relate to the way data is managed within and across FTA Participant Institutions, as discussed in the next subsection.

### 6.2.2. Reporting to Bilateral Donors

Reporting requirements towards bilateral donors vary between donors, and have not been assessed in detail by the Evaluation Team. However, from interactions with FTA researchers it has become evident that FTA has not yet led to a decrease in overall volume or intensity of reporting to bilateral donors.

It is hoped that in future years, with the support of the recommendations made in this report, the intended reduction of overall reporting burden is achieved if an increasing number of donors would consider FTA reports sufficient to satisfy their accountability requirements.

## 6.3. Project-Cycle Management and Data Quality

Individual FTA projects follow the project cycle of the Center leading that particular project. Between CIFOR, ICRAF and Bioversity International, ICRAF appears to have the most structured approval and mapping processes for project proposal, grant agreement and project implementation phases with respect to FTA in place: Window 1 and 2 program funds are explicitly allocated to projects at the proposal stage (indicative) and at grant stage (final). Component Coordinators are involved and have to sign off on any Window 1 and 2 program funds before they are allocated to projects. In addition, ICRAF has a well-developed system for mapping projects to CRPs, FTA components, sub-components, and outputs. In contrast, in CIFOR, mapping of projects to CRPs, components and sub-components is hard and fast only when expenditures are recorded, leading to the curious situation that for some ongoing research it remains unclear whether it actually belongs to FTA or not. The same is true for the source of co-financing, if such is required in otherwise bilaterally funded projects. In the Evaluation Team's view, procedures similar to the ones currently in place at ICRAF should be applied across all FTA Participant Institutions.

Across the entire FTA project portfolio, the Evaluation Team encountered substantial inconsistencies between information from project databases and from financial databases. Overall, and across Centers, close to 100 projects were not found in project databases but accounted, at least partially and for some time, for FTA expenditures.

These inconsistencies can be traced back to three issues that require to be addressed in FTA:

- first: coding quality, i.e. the reliability with which researchers select the matching set of outputs, sub-components, components (and the overall CRP) a project contributes to, is not yet guaranteed. Apparently, the coding of projects that were already ongoing when FTA started represents a challenge and the ensuing coding quality is poor. These projects had to be re-coded several times because of changing coding hierarchies. More importantly however, is the quality with which new projects are coded. Some interviewees reported for example that the drop-down list of available outputs was so long that there was a danger of being biased to pick the first outputs that seemed right, which might, however, lie in the wrong sub-component, component, or even CRP.

This said, the Evaluation Team acknowledges that there is considerable interpretational freedom of, for example, the assignment of a project to a FTA Component, as also acknowledged in the FTA Proposal and by the FTA Steering Committee. In the Evaluation Team's view, it is sufficient to decide on what seems the best fit once a project is mapped to FTA and then to keep that information stable;

- second: the very approach of allowing projects to be divvied up into outputs that can be assigned to different components and even CRPs seems problematic to the Evaluation Team. In some cases, the Evaluation Team identified projects of which only tiny budget shares were assigned to FTA. While it is true that some projects exhibit content that does fit into different components or programs, it is questionable how such fragmented projects can develop a focused orientation towards component and program objectives, how coordination between Component Coordinators of different components and programs can be guaranteed and how double-counting of results can be systematically excluded;
- third: it seems that the work of FTA is not systematically coded to countries across all FTA Centers. Without appropriate data base, the Evaluation Team and MSU staff spent considerable time speculating how work of FTA was or was not overly focused on some countries. This type of information is important both for external communications and reporting, but also, and probably more critical, for targeting and prioritizing FTA research across countries. While the Evaluation Team acknowledges natural difficulties of assigning countries to some types of activities, it perceives the current practice of regional coding only as insufficient. Country coding should be introduced, even at the expense of covering only a well-defined part of all FTA expenditures.

## 6.4. Human Resource Management

From the interviews the Evaluation Team conducted with Human Resources (HR) and other senior managers at CIFOR, ICRAF and Bioversity International, those Centers have suitable hiring and annual performance appraisal procedures in place. Staff appraisals are conducted on an annual basis, with mid-term feedback, and are based on agreed targets that are then appraised by the immediate managerial supervisor, who also incorporates feedback he or she requested from others. As a principle, performance targets and appraisal results of individuals have not been requested or assessed by the Evaluation Team.

The Evaluation Team reviewed job descriptions of the entire FTA leadership group. In most cases, Center job descriptions did not appropriately accommodate FTA-related responsibilities, even when specific Terms of Reference for FTA positions were available.

Possibly related, when surveyed, about a third of all researchers felt that because of FTA they were now experiencing a two-masters' problem of potentially conflicting directions from FTA and from their home institution<sup>56</sup>. Integration of FTA-specific job duties into the HR-procedures of FTA Centers is therefore recommended (Sections 7.2 and 7.4).

Overall salary and benefit packages, including travel policies, vary considerably from Center to Center. This does however not seem to have created problems in the past and no case of complaint had been registered with the Lead Center HR department. In view of growing intensity of collaboration, the HR departments of FTA Participant Institutions should explore options to harmonize benefits for comparable jobs across institutions. This appears important and feasible especially between CIFOR and ICRAF because of the strong focus both Centers have on FTA, whereas it may be less realistic for other FTA Participant Institutions for which FTA-related activities represent moderate or marginal parts of their overall work program.

In terms of gender balance at the workplace, 39 percent of all Center researchers involved in FTA (N=311) are men. This ratio is slightly higher for CIFOR and ICRAF with 40 and 43 percent, respectively, and lower for Bioversity, with 28 percent. In the FTA leadership group (N=16), women are a 30 percent minority. Interestingly, more than half of all women in that group are staff of Bioversity International. No gender diversity data is presented for CIAT because of the small number of people involved.

The Evaluation Team finds that these figures indicate an overall positive trend. Historically, the overall share of women researchers in the CGIAR has been unsatisfactorily low. In 2005, with only 24 percent, CIFOR's share of female researchers was still ahead of the CGIAR average (Science Council of the CGIAR, 2007, p. 65), and has increased substantially since then. ICRAF has successfully recovered from beneath-average gender balance figures in 2005 to be the FTA Center with the highest share of female researchers involved in FTA.<sup>57</sup> Center strategies that were reviewed also place emphasis on gender balance at the workplace (e.g. CIFOR, 2008, p. 15).

## 6.5. CIFOR Performance as Host of FTA

FTA's Lead Center to date, CIFOR, fulfills several parallel roles in FTA. One useful way to segregate those roles, also in view of the assessment of FTA governance and management

<sup>56</sup> Of 193 FTA researchers that answered this survey question, 7 percent strongly and 29 percent somewhat agreed to the following statement: "Because of FTA, I am now experiencing a two-masters' problem: I feel that I may be receiving conflicting directions for my work both from a person in my home organization and a different person in charge of my work in FTA."

<sup>57</sup> While the generalizations from researchers involved in FTA to all Center researchers implicitly made in this paragraph are justified for CIFOR and likely acceptable for ICRAF in view of the high degree of investment of these Centers in FTA, no such comparison can be made for Bioversity International or CIAT.

in Chapter 7, is to differentiate between an agent and host role, the role of a FTA Participant Institution, and that of programmatic leadership, resulting in three distinct roles:

1. **a fiduciary and legal agent role for FTA, and a host role for the FTA Management Support Unit (MSU).** Such agent and host arrangements are common for global programs (Independent Evaluation Group, 2007) and have been assessed previously in the CGIAR context (Science Council and CGIAR Secretariat, 2007). In its fiduciary and legal agent role, CIFOR holds in trust and manages FTA funds on behalf of the program and signs all FTA-related paperwork. This implies that CIFOR carries the ultimate financial and legal responsibility for FTA towards the CGIAR Consortium Board<sup>58</sup>. In addition, CIFOR also physically hosts the FTA MSU;
2. **a FTA Participant Institution role,** implementing a share of the overall FTA program, delegating staff to FTA, and contributing to FTA governance at par with other FTA Participant Institutions;
3. **a programmatic leadership role,** i.e. providing strategic direction and managerial oversight beyond of what is contained in the other two roles.

This section focuses on assessing CIFOR's performance in the first role. The second role has been assessed – at par with that of the other FTA Centers, in earlier chapters of this report. As for the third, role, CIFOR has adopted a careful hands-off approach that will be studied in more detail in Section 7.1.

Two general considerations are of importance for assessing CIFOR's performance as host and agent:

- as fiduciary and legal agent, CIFOR experiences a natural tension between its upstream accountability towards the Consortium Board and the fact that FTA-related decision-making has largely been delegated to the FTA Steering Committee. This tension is recognized in the FTA Proposal: "It is expected that the lead center will normally defer to the decisions taken by the Steering Committee. Nevertheless, consistent with its legal and fiduciary responsibility, and the tolerance of the lead center's Board for programmatic and financial risk, the lead center may in rare cases challenge a decision taken by the Steering Committee" (FTA, 2011, p. 235);
- in global partnership programs, conflicts between programmatic and institutional interests can usually not be entirely avoided and therefore represent the norm rather than the exception. After minimizing them to the extent possible, the

<sup>58</sup> CIFOR is however not accountable to bilateral donors for other FTA Participant Institutions' bilaterally funded projects mapped to FTA.

remaining conflicts of interest need to be recognized and managed<sup>59</sup>. This is not different for FTA. While the strategies of CIFOR and ICRAF are quite well aligned with FTA, this alignment cannot be expected to be – or remain – perfect. All FTA Participant Institutions have a legitimate and natural desire to influence FTA towards benefiting their institutions in parallel to an interest in maximizing FTA programmatic effectiveness and efficiency. FTA governance needs to provide a platform for balancing these various interests (See Sections 7.1 and 7.4). As agent and host, CIFOR has the means at hand to exert a stronger influence on FTA strategy, priorities, and management than other FTA Participant Institutions. Here it is useful to distinguish between legitimate agent and host interests, such as ensuring that FTA follows CIFOR financial and legal policies and does not put the Center unduly at financial, legal, reputational or other risk, and – hypothetical – illegitimate agent and host interests, such as pressuring FTA management towards decisions that financially or otherwise benefit the Lead Center.

From the Evaluation Team's broad-based observations,<sup>60</sup> CIFOR has performed well as fiduciary and legal agent, and as host of the MSU, and has shown a remarkable degree of careful attention to not leverage the agent and host role unduly.

Overall, FTA Participant Institutions appear satisfied, and have not voiced any issues to the Evaluation Team, with the way CIFOR has handled financial and legal matters for the program. Downstream contracts with FTA Participant Institutions were issued in reasonable time after CIFOR had signed its own upstream contract with the Consortium.<sup>61</sup> However, the continued lack of harmonized data management and reporting standards across Centers continues to represent an issue of concern.

While employed by CIFOR, reporting to and having his office across the corridor from the CIFOR DG, the FTA Director did not appear under the DG's thumb and showed clear signs of

<sup>59</sup> The term "conflict of interest" is sometimes confused with "unrecognized and unmanaged conflicts of interests." Whereas the former simply represents a system feature, neither good nor bad, the latter is an undesirable system quality. Because of this confusion, and a perceived negative connotation with the term "conflicts of interest," there is a risk in global partnership programs to not acknowledge and not manage important conflicts of interests which may result in ineffective or dysfunctional governance.

<sup>60</sup> Interviews and interactions with the DGs and BOT members of all four Participating Centers, the FTA Director and FTA staff of all four Centers, document review, including up- and downstream FTA contracts, the FTA Proposal and various progress reports, and the analysis of meeting minutes of the FTA Steering Committee and of all four Center BOTs.

<sup>61</sup> FTA Program Implementation Agreement (PIA) between the Consortium and CIFOR was signed on October 4, 2011. CIFOR signed downstream Program Participant Agreements (PPAs) with ICRAF on November 14, 2011, with Bioversity International on November 28, 2011, and with CIAT on January 20, 2012. More recently, Letters of Agreement have been signed with CIRAD and CATIE.



behavioral and intellectual independence. This “hands-off” approach of CIFOR towards FTA is also reflected in CIFOR’s handling of matters in the FTA Steering Committee (see Section 7.1).<sup>62</sup>

After CIFOR and ICRAF struggled for FTA leadership in 2010, and in the context of a strained relationship between the two DGs at that time, CIFOR showed commendable sensitivity in avoiding real or perceived exploitation of its role as agent and host. This careful handling is likely to have made a substantial positive contribution to today’s good relations between CIFOR and ICRAF.

## 6.6. Conclusions and Recommendations

**Financial management.** FTA has shown considerable spending performance in view of sometimes uncertain and delayed disbursements of Window 1 and 2 program funds. However, more long-term predictability and reliability of funding is required to increase FTA’s planning horizon. Timelier disbursements are needed to avoid future cash flow problems of FTA Participant Institutions. A reason for concern is the continued practice by many bilateral donors of issuing grants that exhibit significantly insufficient cost recovery.

Currently, both the lack of long-term reliability and the diversion of significant Window 1 and 2 FTA resources to co-finance bilateral grants limit FTA’s ability to fund key areas of high relevance for which bilateral funds are hard to raise, such as Sentinel Landscapes.

**Recommendation 8. The Evaluation Team recommends that the Fund Council and the Consortium Office improve the predictability, reliability and timely disbursement of Window 1 and 2 resources to FTA and urge CGIAR members to provide full cost recovery when acting as bilateral donors.**

**This recommendation is addressed to:**

- The Fund Council, the Consortium Board, and their offices.

**Key points (“must have’s”):**

- Acknowledgment and declaration of intent of Fund Donors to ensure predictable and reliable funding that is disbursed timely, and explicit instructions of the Fund Council to the Consortium Office to work towards this objective.
- Acknowledgment and declaration of intent of Fund Donors to ensure full cost recovery for FTA bilateral grants whenever acting as bilateral donors, to the extent possible within their institutional rules and regulations.

<sup>62</sup> For example, the Steering Committee agreed to a slight adjustment of earlier budget plans for 2014, resulting in less Window 1 and 2 resources for CIFOR (CRP6 Steering Committee, 2013, p. 5).



## Further suggestions:

- Fund Council establishes a system to increase transparency on incomplete cost recovery of bilateral FTA grants by Fund Donors and receives reports of the ensuing statistics.

**Data management and reporting.** The Evaluation Team has identified several challenges related to data management across FTA Centers. Procedures at ICRAF are found to be a good practice. Overall coding reliability of research mapped to FTA is not yet satisfactory and the Evaluation Team would have assigned about a quarter of all FTA projects reviewed to a different component. Predominantly in Components 2 and 3, there may be a desire to keep projects in a component led by the respective project-implementing Center. Some projects are also fragmented across many CRPs and components, rendering straightforward management towards CRP objectives difficult. In addition, country information is not systematically tracked across program activities.

## **Recommendation 9. The Evaluation Team recommends that the quality and coherence of FTA data management be improved.**

### **This recommendation is addressed to:**

- The FTA Steering Committee, all FTA Participant Institutions.

### **Key points (“must have’s”):**

- Overall coding reliability is improved and mapping of bilaterally funded projects to FTA is decided at proposal stage.
- Country information is tracked as part of FTA expense reporting.
- Fragmentation of projects across many CRPs and components is avoided unless clearly justified by a project.
- FTA Centers should align to good practice processes similar to those currently in place at ICRAF.

### **Further suggestions:**

- The One Corporate System (OCS) software is taken into consideration to align data management beyond FTA, satisfying a critical requirement for coherence from a Center perspective.

FTA’s annual reporting to the Consortium Office and Board is based on detailed output-level “traffic light” reports and extensive narratives along pre-defined Consortium templates. FTA’s progress reporting, while detailed, diligent and transparent, has remained incomplete as only output-level achievements are systematically tracked and reported. Outcome-level results are described in selected case examples only. The present reporting exhibits several

challenges. Formats and definitions have changed almost yearly, reflecting evolving Consortium Office guidance. This renders systematic follow up on output-level performance across years difficult. Bilaterally funded projects mapped to FTA – representing most of FTA’s research – appear primarily managed as Center projects. Their mapping to FTA is sometimes only hard and fast once expenses have been occurred. Hence, explicit targets are developed without knowing what projects will be available to deliver them and achievements are collected from project teams on top of their bilateral reporting indicators.

The Evaluation Team has not been able to verify any reduction of reporting requirements to bilateral donors. At the same time, significant reporting requirements towards the Consortium Board and Office emerged. It is hoped that in future years increased donor alignment will lead to the intended reduction of the overall reporting burden.

## 7. FTA Governance and Management

This report applies the definitions of global program governance and management as found in OECD-DAC guidance for global program evaluation<sup>63</sup>.

- **Global program governance** is defined as the structures, functions, processes, and organizational traditions that have been put in place within the context of a program's authorizing environment, to ensure that the program is run in such a way that it achieves its objectives in an effective and transparent manner. Governance is also the framework of accountability to users, stakeholders and the wider community, within which organizations take decisions, and lead and control their functions, to achieve their objectives.
- Instead, **global program management** concerns the day-to-day operation of the program within the context of the strategies, policies, processes, and procedures that have been established by its governing bodies.

A useful mnemonic is that whereas governance is concerned with “doing the right thing,” management is concerned with “doing things right”<sup>64</sup>.

Section 7.1 of this chapter summarizes findings on FTA governance in several subsections, and section 7.2 then recaps observations on FTA management. Section 7.3 comments on current plans for results-based management and performance-based allocation of resources for FTA and summarizes observations on the work of FTA's MEIA Team. The chapter closes with governance and management-related conclusions and recommendations (section 7.4).

### 7.1. FTA Governance

Governing arrangements of global programs usually seek to deliver a similar set of governance functions, and aim to adhere to a number of good governance principles. These functions and principles, as well as findings, guidance and policies on governance of Centers and of earlier programmatic approaches in the CGIAR have been summarized in volume II, Annex G of this report.

For FTA, several bodies and institutions have contributed to FTA governance, and are bound together by two interrelated accountability frameworks that are described and assessed in

<sup>63</sup> Cited from (Independent Evaluation Group, 2007, p. 71) but partly based on literature cited therein. Some formatting has been omitted and the wording has been slightly adapted.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

Section 7.1.1 below. Section 7.1.2 then characterizes the bodies and institutions involved and their contributions to FTA governance. Section 7.1.3 summarizes findings on FTA's ability to define and set strategic direction and Section 7.1.4 concludes with observations on overall governance efficiency.

## 7.1.1. FTA Accountability Frameworks

This section highlights FTA-specific agreements and contracts with direct relevance for accountability under FTA as a basis for the subsequent analysis of FTA governance. It is understood that these agreements need to be interpreted and understood in the context of the overall framework of principles, policies and agreements of the reformed CGIAR as well as in the context of the Participating Centers' host country agreements, their related independent international organization status, and their own Center policies. It is also understood that legal frameworks and accountability considerations alone, while important, do not define governance.

For FTA as a CGIAR Research Program, responsibility and accountability for oversight, implementation and reporting is in essence handed down across four distinct layers in the CGIAR: from the Fund Council to the Consortium, then from the Consortium to the Lead Center, and then – for those parts of FTA not implemented by the Lead Center itself – to FTA Participant Institutions. This “flowing-down” of responsibility and accountability is manifested in three types of contracts connecting three pairs of levels:

- a “Consortium Performance Agreement” (CPA), signed between the Fund Council and the Consortium, renders the Consortium Board accountable to the Fund Council for FTA. The FTA CPA refers to the FTA Proposal and to the “Joint Agreement,” an umbrella arrangement between the Fund Council and the Consortium;
- a “Program Implementation Agreement” (PIA), signed between the Consortium and CIFOR, as FTA Lead Center, holds CIFOR accountable for the entire program towards the Consortium Board;
- CIFOR, in turn, has signed several “Program Participant Agreements” (PPAs) with FTA Centers, rendering those institutions, in turn, accountable for their respective contributions to FTA. Similarly, but not following the same template, CIFOR has signed Letters of Agreement with the two non-CGIAR FTA Participant Institutions CIRAD and CATIE. In addition to its overall responsibilities, CIFOR remains accountable to the Consortium Board and Office for its own remaining share of FTA activities without codifying this in a circular PPA with itself.

The exact scope of responsibility and accountability differs between layers. Each layer discharges a subset and retains residual FTA-related responsibility and accountability. With

respect to FTA governance, these residual responsibilities and the related functions represent the *raison d'être* of that level with respect to oversight, implementation and reporting on FTA.

This accountability framework covers all of FTA, i.e. activities funded by programmatic funds from Windows 1 and 2 of the CGIAR Fund as well as those funded by bilateral project donors and mapped to FTA.

For the latter category of activities, i.e. mostly or entirely bilaterally funded projects mapped to FTA, a second accountability framework exists. About 60 percent of the overall FTA budget – and the lion's share of the program's research projects – are covered by and executed under direct, bilateral funding or grant agreements between donors and FTA Participant Institutions. These bilateral, project-level agreements represent legally binding contracts, and establish a direct line of accountability between the project donor and the implementing FTA Participant Institution.

Several observations can be made regarding these two interrelated accountability frameworks:

**First**, for all FTA-related work under bilateral project-level funding, dual lines of contractual accountability exist:

- one between the project donor and the FTA Participant Institution, by virtue of the bilateral funding agreement; and
- another one from the FTA Participating Center to the Lead Center (if not identical), and from there onwards to the Consortium and to the Fund Council, because the Center has signed a PPA or PIA, and because the Center is a member of the Consortium (i.e. signatory of the Consortium Constitution) with related rights and responsibilities.

These dual lines of accountability lead to contractual dilemmas if different activities and results are expected from the two contractors, i.e. from the contracting unit of a project donor and from project-related priorities derived from the priorities set for FTA by the Fund Council and the Consortium Board and Office. As discussed throughout this report, this represents a serious problem in the future if the current *status quo* is maintained (see e.g. Sections 4.4, 7.4, and Chapter 8). If instead, future bilateral FTA funding were sought primarily with program priorities in mind, there should be no dilemma. The same applies in the case of irreconcilable policies applied by the two contractors, for example as seen in the case of contractual obligations to ensure full cost recovery for bilateral projects within FTA and, at the same time, the current practice of incomplete costing of grants by many bilateral donors (Section 6.3.1).

**Second**, there is a high level of uncertainty among people interviewed regarding exactly which obligations exist for bilaterally funded projects within FTA, how compliance to those obligations is assessed, and what consequences ensue in case of non-compliance. This applies to agreements between all levels: from FTA Participant Institutions to the Lead Center, from the Lead Center to the Consortium, and from the Consortium to the Fund Council.

FTA-specific agreements with FTA Centers (CPA, PIA, and PPAs) focus on obligations and liabilities related to funds from Windows 1 and 2. Regarding bilaterally funded projects, these contracts only state that full cost recovery and recuperation of system costs need to be ensured, and that project reports to bilateral donors must be made available to the Consortium Board and Office. Programmatic responsibilities related to bilaterally funded work under FTA are not further detailed. In the Letters of Agreement signed with CIRAD and CATIE, no responsibilities regarding bilaterally funded work were visible. While the above-mentioned agreements and CGIAR-level legal documents clearly identify FTA to consist of both Window 1 and 2 programmatic funds and bilateral funding mapped to FTA, there appears to be little clarity on how compliance is defined and monitored, and what consequences exist in the case of non-compliance.

**Third**, the four-layered institutional structure bridged by three different types of contracts appears rather complex for the management of one program. Responsibility for FTA as a whole is handed down twice: from the Fund Council to the Consortium, and from the Consortium to the Lead Center. Responsibility for FTA-related work implemented by FTA Participant Institutions other than the Lead Center is handed down once more. Keeping in mind that each layer is contractually obliged to ensure checks and balances, a strong value-adding rationale is required to justify the marginal cost, capacity needs and delayed decision-making speed incurred with each additional layer.

## 7.1.2. Bodies and Institutions Involved in FTA Governance

In what follows, contributions to FTA governance by a number of involved bodies and institutions are characterized. The circle of entities is purposefully cast beyond what most interviewees considered to constitute FTA governance bodies, namely the Lead Center Board, the **Steering Committee (SC)** and the – never established – Scientific and Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SSAC). Instead, a number of additional bodies and institutions are included as well, albeit in somewhat less detail: FTA Participating Centers and their Boards<sup>65</sup> and the Consortium Board and Office. This is done in recognition that FTA governance functions are not provided by the FTA Steering Committee alone (acting with delegated

<sup>65</sup> It should also be noted that the governing bodies of CIRAD and CATIE have not been considered because of their relatively recent involvement with FTA.

authority from the Lead Center Board) but that other bodies and institutions (should) contribute to FTA governance as well.

The **Steering Committee (SC)** was established as planned, initially with five members: four institutional members – one for each Participating Center – and the FTA Director as non-voting ex-officio member. Membership was later extended to include two additional institutional representatives: one from CIRAD in 2012 and one from CATIE in 2013.

The SC met seven times to date: twice in 2011 and 2013, respectively, and three times in 2012, in accordance with its planned semiannual minimum frequency. Meetings times averaged 4.5 hours. The first meeting took place in February 2011, 4 months prior to FTA's start date. With one exception, the SC met in person.

Meeting attendance was seamless and high-profile for all members apart from CIAT which missed two of seven meetings<sup>66</sup>. Based on the meeting minutes, the SC meetings appear to have been well prepared and conducted in an efficient and professional manner. Deliberations and decisions reached were clearly recorded in meeting minutes and the consensus-based decision-making seems to have worked reasonably well.

The SC operates according to terms of reference described in the FTA Proposal (FTA, 2011, p. 234) which covered four main categories, namely:

1. strategic planning, oversight and monitoring;
2. ensuring that CRP6 benefits from external input from expert and stakeholder groups;
3. performance review, and
4. resource allocation and design of performance contracts.

In the first category – strategic planning, oversight and monitoring – the SC has largely fulfilled its terms of reference. It has reviewed and approved FTA plans and budgets, and implementation progress against those, has overseen and approved monitoring and evaluation work and established an evaluation budget line, and has provided overall guidance to the FTA Director. The SC seems to have focused to a lesser extent on communication and outreach strategies that also form part of its responsibilities in that category.

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<sup>66</sup> The DGs of CIFOR and Bioversity attended all seven meetings themselves, ICRAF's DG attended six meetings and was replaced a single time by a senior staff member, CIRAD had a department director attending all three meetings after joining and the CATIE DG attended the first meeting in which CATIE was a member in person. Only CIAT showed a somewhat less coherent attendance, being absent in two consecutive meetings in late 2011 and early 2012 one of which, curiously, was held at CIAT headquarters. The FTA Director attended all six SC meetings after being appointed after the first SC meeting had already taken place in August 2011. A varying number of 2-5 additional center staff attended SC meetings.



The SC was less engaged in ensuring external expert and stakeholder input – the second category in the SC Terms of Reference. Here, members and observers have partly fulfilled this function in-person whereas the planned SSAC was never established and, as far as the Evaluation is aware, no *ad hoc* scientific advisory panels were formed. However, the SC has been active in ensuring that CGIAR system-level guidance was applied to FTA.

Within the third category (performance review), the SC has been engaged in the selection of the FTA Director and has consulted the Lead Center DG on the Director's annual performance appraisal. The SC encouraged the Director to conduct performance appraisals of Component Coordinators. Regarding Lead and Participating Center performance, no review process seems to have been designed or applied. As mandated, the SC established policies and procedures for selection of new SC members<sup>67</sup> and approved two additional members since its inception. Seen from a Center perspective, this is remarkable and commendable in itself, since new members participate in the available Window 1 and 2 FTA funding and increasing FTA SC membership therefore translates into less relative funding share for the earlier SC member institutions. A potential legitimacy issue lies in the fact that one Participant Center (CIAT) has failed to fulfill all criteria for partner SC membership in the past.

Finally, in the fourth category (resource allocation and design of performance contracts) the SC has successfully negotiated and obtained consensus on allocation of Window 1 and 2 resources between FTA Participant Institutions. The SC deliberated and tried, but not managed, to substantially move away from the protection and propagation of initial 2011 funding shares towards resource allocation driven by strategic priorities and performance. A laudable exception is the establishment of a holdback fund that currently finances three collaborative, competitively selected FTA projects from Window 1 and 2 program resources. Overall, however, it appears as if the SC encounters its natural limits, as a body composed entirely of recipient institutions of Window 1 and 2 funds, when it comes to the strategic allocation of those funds. Currently discussed mechanistic allocation rules based on "Window 1 and 2 to bilateral" fund ratios do not appear to solve this issue, as discussed in more detail in Section 6.1.3. Several remaining responsibilities in this category related to the

<sup>67</sup> The five agreed criteria for partner membership in the SC (CRP6 Steering Committee, 2011, p. 4) are:

- "Expertise and geographic coverage complementing those of the existing institution members
- Endorsement of and commitment to achieve the CRP6 expected outputs and outcomes
- A minimum commitment of 3 years
- Direct involvement in at least 3 of the 5 components and in the cross-cutting themes (gender and sentinel landscapes)
- Financial contribution greater than 2M USD per year with a minimum of 50% in "new" funding (i.e. not already included as existing projects in 2012-2014 operational plan)

A partner fulfilling these criteria does not become a *de facto* member of the SC. The decision to include a specific partner is contingent of the availability of an available member slot and of the comparison with other competing partners for this available slot."

hierarchy of FTA contracts do not seem to have been deliberated by the SC, possibly because those contracts left little room for negotiation, and because these tasks fell into the hands of individual SC members rather than to the SC as a whole. Annual budget and contract approval meetings of the SC with the DGs of FTA Centers – one item in the SC's terms of reference – never took place, likely because most DGs were already representing their centers in the SC. In its 7<sup>th</sup> meeting in November 2013, the SC started a revision process of its Terms of Reference that address several of the points made above.

As mentioned earlier, the planned **FTA Science and Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SSAC)** was never established. The FTA SC, in its first meeting in February 2011, still planned for a first SSAC meeting in 2012 and prearranged a nomination process involving the Component Coordinators and Component Focal Points later in 2011.

The idea to establish a SSAC, according to the FTA Proposal, was motivated by the recognition “that input from experts and a diverse array of stakeholders is required to capture the range of experience, perspectives and expertise needed to make CRP6 a success” (FTA, 2011, p. 237). The SSAC was to meet as needed and requested but at least annually and to advise FTA on its research and impact strategies and to provide advice on partnerships, gender and capacity-building. The SSAC was intended to assemble a sizable and diverse group of experts and stakeholders. The SSAC would consist of: “other entities within the CGIAR Consortium, key donors, National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS), Advanced Research Institutes (ARIs), capacity-building organizations, civil society organizations, especially women's organizations, representatives from community organizations representing poor forest-dependent, communities or local farmers, international organizations” (FTA, 2011, p. 238).

In its second meeting in September 2011, the SC changed course and, after some consideration of alternatives, the idea of establishing the SSAC or of harvesting scientific expert and stakeholder input through other arrangements dropped from SC meeting agendas and minutes afterwards<sup>68</sup>.

The Evaluation Team concurs with the SC's view that the setup of a rigid advisory mechanism involving a large number of very different stakeholders would not have been good value for money. At the same time, the prolonged absence of a structured way of harvesting input of key FTA stakeholders represents a weakness in FTA's current governance arrangement, threatens its legitimacy and accountability *vis-à-vis* those groups, and should be remedied separately for different groups.

<sup>68</sup> In its second meeting in September 2011, the SC concluded that i) “it would probably be more useful and efficient to try to build a donor advisory group”, and ii) that instead of establishing a rigid structure right away, it would be preferable to “organize a meeting bringing together a limited number of ‘CRP6 savvy’ individuals belonging to donor agencies and not directly involved in implementation of the programme.”

As summarized in Section 5.3 on partnerships, FTA should work towards further aligning and strengthening direct relationships with its bilateral and programmatic donors and with boundary and strategic partners. In all cases, the SC and the Director must play an important role while establishing relevant and strong partnerships with boundary partners directly involved in FTA project-level work. This is most effective on the level of program components or below.

Regarding relevant scientific expert advice, the FTA SC and the FTA Director should make increased use of *ad hoc* scientific advisory groups, committees or meetings as required for informing programmatic strategic direction setting. The Evaluation Team projects that an increased SC and Director mandate, as recommended further below, will create an increasing need for such expert advice.

The current **Lead Center (CIFOR)** and its **Board of Trustees (BOT)**. As FTA's current Lead Center, CIFOR is financially and legally responsible for FTA towards the Consortium Board, with which it has signed the Program Implementation Agreement (PIA). As described in Section 6.5, the Lead Center can be considered to fulfill three distinct, parallel roles in FTA: a fiduciary and legal agent role, the role of a FTA Participant Institutions at par with others, and a programmatic leadership role beyond the first two. CIFOR's performance along the first role has been assessed in Section 6.5, and its contributions to FTA governance along the second role will be analyzed, together with that of other FTA Participant Institutions, further below.

In CIFOR's third role as Lead Center, i.e. the provision of strategic direction and managerial oversight beyond what is contained in the other two roles, expectations and obligations are unclear. On the one hand, the FTA Proposal states that a "single lead center will be responsible for managing CRP6" and that "CRP6 will be governed by the Board of the lead center, with oversight provided by the Consortium Board" (FTA, 2011, p. 231), seemingly giving little voice to FTA Centers or the FTA SC. At the same time, the Proposal lays out a more differentiated division of responsibilities with substantial voice for FTA Participant Institutions as members of FTA SC: "It is expected that the lead center will normally defer to the decisions taken by the Steering Committee. Nevertheless, consistent with its legal and fiduciary responsibility, and the tolerance of the lead center's Board for programmatic and financial risk, the lead center may in rare cases challenge a decision taken by the Steering Committee" (FTA, 2011, p. 235).

In practice, the CIFOR BOT and management have carefully avoided imposing themselves on other FTA Participant Institutions. Examples are the consensus-based selection of the FTA Director, the abstinence of the CIFOR BOT in determining allocation of resources between FTA Participant Institutions and, related, the non-dominant role the CIFOR DG (and Chair of FTA SC) played in resource allocation discussions in the FTA SC, and an overall policy of

decentralized leadership, delegating a maximum of responsibility for planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation to FTA Participant Institutions.

The CIFOR BOT, that continued its biannual in-person meetings before, during and after FTA had been set up mid-2011, focuses its strategic and managerial leadership and oversight functions on the portion of FTA implemented by CIFOR and on the risks and opportunities that FTA, as a whole, represent for CIFOR. It does not extend strategic and managerial leadership to those parts of FTA covered by agreements with FTA Program Participants but focuses on managing the residual risks between these downstream agreements and its own upstream agreement with the Consortium (the Program Implementation Agreement). An example for this is FTA cash management in case of delayed or reduced availability of Window 1 and 2 funds.

Contractually, CIFOR has taken care to pass on responsibility and accountability for implementation of FTA Participant Institutions' shares of work to those institutions by essentially reiterating the same contractual formulas contained in upstream agreements between CIFOR and the Consortium and between the Consortium and the Fund Council. Residual financial risk, for example the potential need to pre-finance work implemented by FTA Participant Institutions without having received the corresponding funds, have been highlighted by the CIFOR Board Chair.

The Evaluation Team finds that CIFOR's "hands-off approach" towards its role as programmatic leader was the right choice and strengthened the partnership between FTA Participant Institutions. Compared to the situation during FTA's inception that was marked by competition for FTA leadership between CIFOR and ICRAF and a difficult relationship of the former DG of CIFOR and the incoming and present DG of ICRAF, there is a clear trend towards more trust and increased collaboration.

A more authoritative and less collaborative leadership approach by CIFOR would also have disregarded the important fact that most of FTA's activities are based on bilateral project-level contracts with individual donors that essentially bypass the programmatic funding mechanism of the reformed CGIAR, and for which responsibility and accountability towards the Lead Center and the Consortium Board and Office are not clearly stated, as discussed in section 7.1.1. It therefore seems difficult to drive FTA – irrespective of the funding sources – by a central strategy without involving FTA Participant Institutions as equal partners.

At the same time, coming back to the potential roles CIFOR can fulfill in FTA, the sensible approach by CIFOR leaves little room for a meaningful and value-adding third role, i.e. in providing strategic and managerial leadership to FTA beyond being an equal partner Participating Center and acting as agent and host.

Moreover the combination of CIFOR's role as fiduciary and legal agent for FTA with only limited or no direct control over most of the program represents a substantial risk to CIFOR without much benefit for the Center.

**FTA Participant Institutions and their respective governing bodies.** Since most of the funding for FTA flows through bilateral contracts between individual donors and FTA Participant Institutions, FTA governance and the governance of these institutions become inextricably integrated.

The BOTs of CIFOR, ICRAF, Bioversity International and CIAT, the CIRAD BOT, and CATIEs governing bodies<sup>69</sup> fulfill typical governance functions for their institutions: they provide strategic direction, oversee management and approve work plans and budgets, ensure proper stakeholder participation, manage financial and other risks, manage conflicts of interest and conflicts between partners and oversee audits and evaluations<sup>70</sup>. While, by mandate, these governing bodies work in the best interest of the institution they represent, they provide important functions to FTA governance as well, most importantly by ensuring that work under FTA is implemented timely and with the agreed focus and quality.

Apart from these general functions, FTA Center BOTs<sup>71</sup> have specifically addressed FTA-related issues in different ways and with varying intensity.

- For CIFOR's BOT, FTA has been on the agenda since 2009. The BOTs attention has intensified during the proposal development and has remained high ever since. This is not surprising in view of the facts that CIFOR has been FTA Lead Center and that FTA represents pretty much all of what CIFOR does (e.g. 98 percent of CIFOR's 2012 expenditures). CIFOR BOT's activities in its role as FTA Participant Institution – as far as that can be discerned from its other roles – have focused on proposal structure and design in 2009 and 2010 and on various aspects of overseeing and providing guidance to CIFOR's share of FTA, and on collaboration with ICRAF and other FTA Participant Institutions.
- ICRAF's BOT has devoted considerable attention to FTA since 2010, also reflecting the fact that FTA covers most of ICRAF's work (e.g. 68 percent of ICRAF's 2012 expenditures). After early deliberations in 2009, the BOT considered proposal design, FTA leadership, and collaboration with CIFOR in 2010 and 2011 and moved towards

<sup>69</sup> CATIE has three main governing bodies: the Inter-American Board of Agriculture, the Governing Council of Ministers, and the Board of Directors.

<sup>70</sup> See (Independent Evaluation Group, 2007) and volume II, Annex G for a list of standard governance functions of global partnership programs.

<sup>71</sup> The CIRAD BOT and the governing bodies of CATIE have not been interviewed for this evaluation, nor have their meeting minutes been analyzed.

progress updates, operational issues and strategic development of FTA after FTA had become operational.

- Bioversity International's BOT has not addressed FTA specifically but has dealt with its involvement in CRPs in general terms. This may reflect the fact that Bioversity International's engagement in 10 CRPs poses challenge for any meeting agenda if treated CRP by CRP, but is nevertheless surprising considering that Bioversity is still significantly invested in FTA. In 2012, FTA represented 17 percent of Bioversity International's expenditures.
- Finally, CIAT's BOT has only addressed FTA specifically on a few occasions and largely dealt with FTA as one of the smaller CRPs CIAT is involved in. This is not surprising, considering that – in budgetary terms – both CIAT's involvement in FTA and FTA portion of the total FTA budget are marginal (both around 1 percent in terms of 2012 expenditures).

It is noteworthy that the BOTs of ICRAF and CIFOR have intensified their already existing integration over recent years. For some time, predating FTA, the Chairs have cross-represented their Center as full BOT members in the respective other BOT. Since 2013, the ICRAF BOT has also elected the Chair of CIFOR's BOT Program Committee as member. In addition, the Executive Committees of both BOTs held a joint meeting in 2011. This is of critical importance for the future success of FTA. Together, these two institutions represent 88 percent of FTA's overall budget. As highlighted in Chapter 3, even closer collaboration is recommended going forward.

For all FTA Participant Institutions, the DGs and/or SC members have played an important role in ensuring mutual information exchange between the Steering Committee and their home organizations and their governing bodies.

Across all FTA Participant Institutions, the dual accountability framework described in section 7.1.1 is an issue of central importance. A FTA Center is directly accountable – on a project-by-project level – to donors for all bilaterally funded projects, and at the same time is also responsible for adhering to Consortium policies and for contributing to FTA objectives with the ensemble of its bilaterally funded projects mapped to FTA. From the perspective of FTA Centers, the risk inherent in this situation is that of non-compliance to bilateral donors, to the Consortium Board and Office, or to both, as long as bilateral projects are not perfectly aligned with programmatic objectives. Mismatches may, ultimately, result in financial and reputational damage to FTA Centers and to the CGIAR as a whole (see Chapter 8).

Another rather related observation for the four FTA Centers is that the programmatic Window 1 and 2 contributions – either specifically for FTA or for CRPs in general – figure



prominently in the risk registers of all four BOTs<sup>72</sup>. Delays in payments, uncertainty about funding levels, and a one-time freeze on all disbursement of contractually committed Window 1 and 2 funding led BOT members to question the predictability and reliability of this source of funding for their Centers. As a consequence, BOTs have moved to mitigate and manage associated risks among other, by strengthening bilateral fundraising within Centers to decrease the Centers' vulnerability to Window 1 and 2 funding delays or shortfalls (see Section 6.1.1). Paradoxically, the apparent success of this risk mitigation strategy, i.e. a strong absolute growth of bilateral funding for most FTA Participating Centers, exacerbates the potential problem for mismatches between bilateral and FTA-related obligations described above.

**The Consortium Board and Office.** The Consortium Board has contributed to FTA governance in several ways, for example:

- in 2010, the Chair of the Consortium Board settled the competition for FTA leadership that had remained unresolved until then. Later, the Consortium Board endorsed the FTA Proposal that was then forwarded to the Fund Council for approval;
- on a regular basis, the Consortium Board approves financing plans for the entire CRP portfolio of the CGIAR. The Consortium Board also oversees the development of and approves important system-level policies, guidelines and templates that apply to all CRPs and contribute to shaping the environment in which FTA and its Centers operate. In particular, the Consortium Board is responsible for the (continued) development of the CGIAR Strategy and Results Framework (SRF), the central guiding document for strategic prioritization and results-based resource allocation across and within CRPs;
- the Consortium CEO (reporting to the Consortium Board) and the Consortium Office (reporting to the CEO) conduct the day to day business of the Consortium based on the CEO's terms of reference and on delegated authority from the Consortium Board. Most FTA-specific interactions and work are conducted by the Consortium Office: in the Consortium Board meeting minutes, FTA was never specifically mentioned other than in relation to its approval.

<sup>72</sup> This observation may or may not apply to the governing bodies of CIRAD and CATIE as well, but no interviews with members of those bodies were conducted nor have the respective meeting minutes been requested and analyzed as for the Participant Center BOTs.



Overall, many Consortium Board functions clearly transcend typical FTA governance functions. The allocation of Window 1 and 2 resources across CRPs or the establishment of system-wide policies<sup>73</sup>, for example, do not represent FTA governance functions.

However, some Consortium Board functions – mostly delegated to the Consortium Office – directly contribute to FTA governance, for example feedback on and input into proposed FTA strategies, multi-year proposals, and annual Plans of Work and Budget (POWBs), or future FTA-internal Window 1 and 2 funding priorities between Flagship Projects in the framework of the currently deliberated SRF Management Update.

For the first set of functions, and along the line of accountability from the Consortium Board and Office to the Lead Center and to the FTA Steering Committee (the latter representing FTA Participant Institutions), the Consortium Board and FTA governance arrangements operate in good complementarity and without overlap.

For the second group of functions, there is a need to ensure directional alignment and efficient decision-making along the line of accountability from the Consortium Board (and Office) to the Lead Center, and from the Lead Center to the Steering Committee. In the example of FTA-internal resource allocation decisions, the Consortium Board and Office, the Lead Center, and the FTA Steering Committee are all likely to have a legitimate say. While there seems to be good overall alignment between the Lead Center and the Steering Committee (due to CIFOR's "hands-off" approach discussed above), interviewees in the Consortium Office and in FTA Centers felt that alignment and mutual responsiveness between the Consortium Office and FTA could be improved. Several senior FTA Center staff and members of FTA Centers BOTs also expressed strong frustrations with the way this important interface was managed by the Consortium Office, citing lack of involvement and information, and *ad hoc* policy changes as examples.

Related to both sets of functions a further risk exists. If, as discussed earlier, there is a mismatch between the two accountability frameworks covering bilaterally funded FTA projects, there is a risk from the Consortium Board's perspective that its programmatic targets are watered down or not reached, and that its policies are neglected.

### 7.1.3. Strategic Direction

An issue of particular concern is the apparently limited ability within the current arrangements to establish strategic priorities for research under FTA beyond the Centers' own strategic priorities. Until now, FTA's research portfolio implemented by the Centers is almost a seamless continuation of FTA Centers' work on forests, trees and agroforestry before FTA was established. This smooth transition was intended but has led to the present

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<sup>73</sup> However, making contributions to such policies does represent an FTA governance function.

situation that FTA's priorities and strategies have been designed to align well with those of FTA's largest Centers, CIFOR's and ICRAF rather than the other way around. Hence, while there currently is near-perfect alignment of projects mapped to FTA with FTA's objectives, the lion's share of work under FTA continues to be driven by the priorities of Centers and a largely non-coordinated group of bilateral donors:

- there seems to be no clear trend towards visibly integrating FTA priorities and projects into project proposals and grant agreements with bilateral donors<sup>74</sup>;
- Fund Donors seem to experience difficulties adhering to Consortium priorities and policies<sup>75</sup> and, therefore, reliance on donor discipline for integrating bilaterally funded work in a coherent fashion into FTA may not be realistic;
- in addition, several FTA donors – for example the second-largest donor to bilaterally funded FTA projects – are not members of the CGIAR (see Table 5 in Section 6.1).

These observations are a matter of serious concern to the Evaluation Team, especially in view of plans for results-based management and, especially, for a system for performance-based allocation of resources, which is to become fully functional in time to drive a development results-based evolution of FTA's research priorities for its second phase from January 2017 onwards (CGIAR Consortium Office, 2013a; Consortium Office, 2013). It has remained unclear to the Evaluation Team how a co-evolution of the bilaterally funded project portfolio with activities directly funded for FTA as a program can be guaranteed under current arrangements.

Therefore, current FTA governance arrangements require a strengthened ability to drive FTA program strategy and research priority setting from a non-partisan and strictly programmatic perspective. This concerns the identification of new, relevant areas of research, the re-prioritization of existing lines of research and, intimately connected, the ability to freely allocate Window 1 and 2 resources among FTA Participant Institutions. The current governance arrangement does not have this capacity because of two reasons:

- although the SC has made commendable efforts towards the inclusion of new FTA Participant Institutions and the establishment of a competitive holdback fund for collaborative research, all SC members would have to declare a conflict of interest

<sup>74</sup> In the Evaluation Team's analysis of 100 project proposals and grant agreements, no trend of integration of bilateral funds into FTA framework has been discernible. While the absence of such integration is natural before FTA became operational, recent grants started in 2012 and 2013 do also not show any documented buy-in from the side of the bilateral donor to specifically fund FTA activities.

<sup>75</sup> For example, apart from the absence of clear FTA integration in recent bilateral proposals and grant agreements of FTA projects funded by Fund Donors, discipline regarding adherence to the CGIAR policy on full cost recovery is not reflected in full-costing of bilateral projects (see Section 6.1.3).

and preclude themselves from decision-making on the allocation of Window 1 and 2 resources if adhering to good governance principles. While repeatedly highlighting the importance of more strategic and less mechanistic fund allocation, SC discussions to date have focused on mechanisms and formulas rather than on scientific and development outcome-motivated research priorities;

- as discussed in more detail in Section 7.3.1, the Consortium Board and Office have not yet delivered a workable results-based management framework and performance-based resource allocation system, nor is the Evaluation Team convinced that current plans for the latter are realistic. In addition, even a fully functional results-based system for fund allocation is unlikely (and probably unintended) to be prescriptive below a certain level of granularity within FTA. Lastly, such a system is likely to operate reactively, i.e. in response to proposed programmatic activities and budgets. Hence, program strategy and fund allocation are likely to remain key functions of the FTA Steering Committee.

## 7.1.4. Governance Efficiency

The Evaluation Team finds that CIFOR's hands-off approach to leading FTA (beyond its role as agent and host, and as equal-partner FTA Participant Institution), was appropriate. It is hard to imagine that FTA, as a partnership program with few but heavily invested participants, could be led and managed successfully by a Lead Center dominating key governance functions such as providing strategic direction, allocating funds, and overseeing management. This situation may be different for other CRPs in which a single Center's mandate and total budget share dominates the entire CRP.

Since it is apparent that a dominant leadership role is not warranted in FTA, the current Lead-Center centric set up appears overly complex. From the perspective of the Lead Center, substantial liabilities outside of the direct control of the Center are incurred. In its role as SC member, the Lead Center also experiences an impediment: by avoiding any perception of being a *primus inter pares*, the SC member representing CIFOR has difficulties to freely express legitimate Center interests. The Lead Center should therefore carefully weigh the costs and benefits associated with the current set up. In theory, a design entirely without Lead Center is also conceivable, in which the SC represents the supreme governance body of FTA with linkages to the Consortium Board and to the governing bodies of all FTA Participant Institutions, and in which the Consortium Board and Office act as legal agent for FTA, issuing Program Participant Agreements directly to all FTA Participant Institutions. This would then effectively remove one contractual and governance layer and increase governance efficiency. Unfortunately, this idea is unlikely to be accepted by FTA Centers unless more trust is built between the Consortium Board and Office, and FTA Centers (see Section 8.2). Alternatively, a strengthened SC, as recommended earlier, with

overall responsibility for approving strategy and overseeing performance is also likely to mitigate CIFOR's risk in a way parallel to how Centers mitigate their financial risks through sound financial reporting and audits.

Another governance efficiency-related issue concerns an observed and probably unintended detachment of the SC from the Consortium Board and Office. While the Lead Center BOT and the SC appear largely aligned, there seems to be less synchronization between the Consortium Board and Office and the SC. As analyzed earlier, the Consortium Board and Office do make a number of important contributions to FTA governance. The current *modus operandi* appears however unnecessarily formal and distant: the SC deliberates based on official information issued by the Consortium Office. Feedback from the Consortium Office may then come as a surprise, and after substantial work has been invested. This distance is not conducive to building trust and mutual respect. It was quite surprising to see that the relationship between the Consortium Office and FTA Participant Institutions has characteristics of a donor-recipient relationship rather than that of partners. From the Evaluation Team's understanding of the goals of the CGIAR reform process, the Consortium was firmly placed on the side of the "Doers", representing the ensemble of Centers and should thus act and be perceived as partner rather than as intermediary donor.

The Evaluation Team therefore recommends (see recommendation 10) adding an authorized ex officio Consortium Office member to the FTA Steering Committee. This person should possess the level of knowledge and authority to guarantee that SC decisions with the consent of that person will have a high probability to be also accepted by the Consortium CEO and the Consortium Board.

## 7.2. FTA Management

FTA – as a program – is managed by an extended leadership group, comprising the FTA Director, the Coordinators of Components 1 through 5, the Gender and Sentinel Landscape Coordinators, and one or more members of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Assessment (MEIA) Team. The Director is supported by two CIFOR staff members who, together with the Director, form the Management Support Unit (MSU). Usually, Component Focal Points and senior Center staff (e.g. DDGs for Research or Directors of the Center's main research domains) are included into meetings of the leadership group as well.

This decentralized approach to program management reflects FTA's "distributed leadership strategy" that delegates principal leadership of components, sub-components and cross-cutting activities to FTA Participant Institutions (currently only to FTA Centers) who assume overall coordination responsibilities for "their" components, sub-components, or cross-cutting activities.

**FTA Director.** Within this decentralized arrangement, the FTA Director's duties entail thought leadership, coordination, support and facilitation, representation of FTA, and supervision of MSU staff. Compared to the set of general management functions of global partnership programs (see volume II, Annex G), the FTA Director has little managerial authority: no mandate or responsibility for decision-making on project proposals and contracts, for the allocation of resources across and within components, for ensuring administrative efficiency of FTA Participant Institutions, and for staff supervision and performance assessment beyond the MSU.

The FTA Proposal originally envisaged a somewhat stronger mandate that included "exercising decision-making authority for day-to-day operations of CRP6, including sign-off on deliverables and the release of funding" (FTA, 2011, p. 236), but this was replaced by "Managing the fund disbursement and deliveries of cross-cutting themes in close coordination with CCT [Component Coordination Team] coordinators" in the present Terms of Reference.

The FTA Director works in a full-time position and reports to the Lead Center DG. At the time this report was written, a search for a new FTA Director had begun after the present Director had accepted another professional opportunity. The arrangement is such that the present Director will continue to fulfill his job duties until a new Director has been appointed.

When asked about the Director's performance, interviewees praised his ability to "walk on broken glass" in FTA's first two years, after CIFOR and ICRAF competed for FTA leadership and the respective DGs developed a frosty relationship, and to conserve and further grow the otherwise intact and healthy staff relations between FTA's largest shareholding Centers. Clearly, the FTA Director managed to establish trust in the FTA leadership group that he does not represent CIFOR's but rather the program's interests. The Director also managed the relationship to the Consortium Office well, transmitting and defending reporting and other requirements to the FTA leadership group while, at the same time, pushing back on disruptive last-minute requests from the Consortium Office.

Several interviewees and survey respondents felt that leadership by the Director at times could have been stronger, leading directional discussions rather than facilitating them; an observation that may be caused by the Director's little authoritative terms of reference, his personal leadership style, or both. In a related open-ended survey question 24 respondents felt that giving the Director (and/or the Component Coordinators) more authority and/or

budget would increase management efficiency while 6 felt that this would not be beneficial<sup>76</sup>.

The performance of the FTA Director is reviewed annually by the Director General of CIFOR, as part of CIFOR's normal HR management practices, taking into account the Directors' terms of reference and after consultation with the FTA Steering Committee. In late 2012, the FTA Director embarked, together with the Component Coordinators, on a comprehensive 360 degree feedback process. However, it was not clear how the results of this feedback were then fed into the Center-internal performance appraisal functions. As a principle, the results of individual performance assessments are not assessed as part of this program evaluation.

**Component Coordinators, Component Focal Points, and Coordinators of cross-cutting activities.** The Terms of Reference for Component Coordinators were established by the SC in its first meeting in February 2011, before FTA became operational, and were revised in 2013.

Component Coordinators are expected to provide component leadership and coordination and integration across FTA Participant Institutions, to convene relevant meetings, guide the development of component work plans, monitor progress on impact pathway development, consolidate component reports, and provide input into fundraising and budgeting. On budget-related matters, the SC agreed on the need to include "budget oversight (cf. control)" into the Component Coordinators' Terms of Reference which, however, is not entirely reflected in the current ToRs.

The FTA Center staff members serving as Component Coordinators also have other duties reflected in the job descriptions issued by their home Centers. Only for the Component 3 Coordinator, the FTA Component Coordinator terms of reference can be considered to be well integrated into the job description in his home Center. In this good practice case, for example, the share of overall work time allotted to the Component Coordinator function is defined and the entire FTA Component Coordinator terms of references are integrated. In all other cases reviewed, the job duties as Component Coordinators were only vaguely referred to or not mentioned at all in the Center's job descriptions. This lack of integration of job descriptions leads to a lack of clarity in the job duties of Component Coordinators, in their mandate *vis-à-vis* others, their relationship towards the FTA Director, and does not provide clarity on if and how performance relative to Component Coordinator functions enters the annual performance appraisals (that are based on the Center's job descriptions). This is a reason for concern to the Evaluation Team as, among other things, conventional

<sup>76</sup> Question 26 in the researcher survey (see volume III): "How could the management efficiency of FTA be improved? Please describe your own ideas but also comment on whether giving the CRP director and the theme leaders more budget or managerial authority would help."



Center ToRs would fail to address a series of skills and duties (as described further below) that are of critical importance for Component Coordinators.

For FTA Coordinators of cross-cutting activities, no standardized FTA Terms of References exist, and the work is formally guided by their respective Center job descriptions. This seems in line with the rather different duties required in the unlike topics and functions subsumed under the term “cross-cutting activities” in this report.

Also for other cross-cutting and support functions, for example capacity development, communications, finance and administration (including human resources), no FTA-specific Terms of Reference exist, and the Evaluation Team has not assessed the Center ToRs for these functions.

Apart from the Director himself, members of the FTA leadership group fulfil their coordination duties on a part-time basis, ranging from 25 or 30 percent for four of the five Component Coordinators to 60 and 70 percent in other cases. For all Coordinators, their coordination and other FTA-related tasks taken together, clearly dominate their average work day.

In several cases, Focal Points have been appointed in Centers that do not lead, but contribute to a component or a cross-cutting activity. Focal Point duties have not been standardized or formalized as Terms of Reference<sup>77</sup> and observed functions range from simply being a Center’s contact point for that component or activity to fulfilling much of a Component Coordinator’s job for the Focal Point’s home Center. Focal Points are usually invited to component or cross-cutting activity meetings, as are further selected senior scientists and managers from FTA Participant Institutions.

In terms of performance, the FTA leadership group brings a wealth of scientific experience to the table and ensures good linkages with the Coordinators’ home Centers because of the managerial seniority of the people involved. In its various interactions, the Evaluation Team witnessed a motivated group of people dedicated to making FTA a success. With respect to mismatches between their FTA and Center job descriptions, coordinators demonstrated a pragmatic and “get the job done” attitude. It was palpable for the Evaluation Team that Coordinators were driven mostly by their convictions and only secondarily by institutional hierarchies, job descriptions and performance assessments.

However, a number of important challenges became evident as well. Some Coordinators struggle with applying their responsibilities beyond their home Center, feeling limited by their mandate or uneasy about moving into what may be perceived as another institution’s

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<sup>77</sup> In its sixth meeting (May 2013), the Steering Committee deferred the discussion on harmonization of Focal Point ToRs and it has not been picked up during its seventh meeting in November 2013.



turf. The need to transcend Center boundaries represents a formidable cultural challenge for a program expressly intended to reach, coordinate and align across institutions.

While the Evaluation Team has not attempted, nor was mandated, to assess the qualification of individual coordinators, it appears evident that a special set of skills is required for these jobs in addition to the standard researcher's or even the standard research manager's set of skills. These qualifications are, for example, the ability to accept, work within, and effectively bridge different institutional cultures and different interpretations of research paradigm, for example between CIFOR's policy information orientation, ICRAF's applied development focus and Bioversity International's agricultural biodiversity perspective.

Coordinators are also loyal employees of their home institutions and may feel constrained and conflicted if the best interest for the component or the cross-cutting activity does not exactly match the best interest for their home institution. In interviews with Coordinators but also with other Center staff and members of the Center's Boards of Trustees, a perceived connection transpired between component or cross-cutting activity leadership and ensuring a continued involvement of the Center with the component and FTA in general.

If unmanaged, this perception and the Coordinators potential conflicts of interest can seriously Center-bias the management of FTA components and cross-cutting activities. Ultimately, this works against the programmatic nature of FTA. While a causal connection cannot be proven, the finding that about a quarter of all projects seem not mapped to the best-fit component and that Bioversity International's involvement is almost exclusively focused on the component which it leads, do provide reasons for concern about the degree of institutional bias in component leadership.

**Effectiveness of FTA program management.** Currently, the FTA Director's Terms of Reference do not allow for much leadership. In line with a strengthened capacity for programmatic direction-setting in the Steering Committee, the Director's mandate to ensure programmatic cohesion needs to be strengthened.

FTA researchers, overall, appear supportive of a stronger mandate of the entire leadership group: in an open ended question that prompted increased authority and/or budget for the Director/Component Coordinators, 35 percent made comments in favor while 9 percent voiced concerns. Some interviewees voiced the concern that researchers cannot be managed by authority alone. The Evaluation Team fully concurs with this reasoning; the measures outlined below must therefore be placed into a context of teamwork and of "convincing by logic and rationale" and not by coercion.

In order to ensure programmatic cohesion, the mapping of any project – independent of its funding source, should be subject to approval by the Director. Currently, this appears not to be the case, for example for fully bilaterally funded projects<sup>78</sup>. The Evaluation Team finds that the involvement of the FTA Director in project mapping to FTA and, ideally, also at an earlier stage in proposal development, is a prerequisite for the establishment of a coherent, results-driven FTA research portfolio.

In addition, the SC should delegate suitable budgetary authority for Window 1 and 2 program funds to the Director. The current holdback fund could, for example, be expanded and put under the direct authority of the Director.

With the approval of the SC, the Director should also be allowed to hire additional staff into the MSU in order to provide central programmatic functions as needed. Hiring of additional staff should, however, strictly follow a “subsidiary principle,” i.e. the MSU should only build up central capacity if related functions cannot be provided with sufficient quality and coordination by FTA Participant Institutions.

In addition, while having commendably performed his duties with behavioral independence from his home institution, any possibility or perception of conflicts of interest, based on the fact that the Director is an employee of the Lead Center with a direct reporting line to the Director General or the Deputy Director General<sup>79</sup>, needs to be avoided.

In order to avoid perceived or real conflicts of interest, the Director should report only to the SC and receive his or her performance assessment from the SC Chair, an independent SC member, based on consultation with the entire SC and any other feedback requested by the Chair. This feedback should then enter the normal HR feedback channels in the host Center and be complemented by general performance criteria in that Center such as for example adherence to work ethic. Since the Lead Center retains overall responsibility for FTA, this implies delegation of this oversight functions from the Lead Center Board to the FTA Steering Committee.

In this regard, the responsibilities of the FTA leadership group in terms of scope and the relation *vis-à-vis* the FTA Director are not well defined and need to be clarified, in order to ensure that Component Coordinators and Coordinators of cross-cutting activities fulfill all their duties as planned, including working across Center borders.

To this end, the HR departments and Center management should fully integrate the existing FTA Component Coordinator ToR into the job description of staff members fulfilling that

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<sup>78</sup> In its first meeting, the SC decided that if a CRP6 Participating Center, or group of centers raises funds with full cost recovery for activities to be managed under CRP6, the CRP6 Director, relevant CIT [Component Implementation Team] and SC need only be informed.

<sup>79</sup> The current ToRs for a new FTA Director establish a direct reporting line to CIFOR's Deputy Director General.

role, for the time share allocated to that role. A good practice example is ICRAF's job description for Component 3 Coordinator, which already fulfills this recommendation.

As a follow-up, it also needs to be ensured that the FTA Director, to which Component Coordinators report for the share of time allocated to their role, has input with an adequate weight (i.e. the time share) into the annual performance assessment of the Coordinator.

A similar arrangement of integrating FTA-specific job duties into Center job descriptions and of ensuring proper performance evaluation input by the FTA Director should be set up for Coordinators of cross-cutting activities, and for Focal Points.

In addition to these downward feedback arrangements, suitable upward feedback processes should be included as well.

### 7.3. Results-Based Management and the Work of FTA's MEIA Team

#### 7.3.1. Current Consortium Plans for RBM and Consequences for FTA

A central driver for the CGIAR reform and a cornerstone of current plans under the Strategy and Results Framework (SRF) is the idea to generally orient research in the CGIAR towards a set of development outcomes that the system as a whole attempts to achieve. This entails a top-down planning and priority setting modus for CRPs and their donors (CGIAR, 2011b, p. 44):

“CRPs organized around development objectives start from the development outcome and organize backwards through the impact pathway, rather than identifying research outputs produced within particular mandates and specifying illustrative impact pathways that potentially contribute to all of the system level outcomes.”

The Evaluation Team fully endorses this general approach to Agricultural Research for Development (AR4D) as a much needed source for increased alignment towards the development objectives CGIAR members, the Consortium Board and Office, Centers, and CRPs should all be aligned to.

Building on this idea, an emerging additional element of the CGIAR reform is the prioritization of research through the expected and measured value for money of the contribution it makes towards the CGIAR's development objectives. From interviews and based on a recent SRF Management Update, the Evaluation Team understands this to literally aim to quantitatively determine the contributions clusters of research activities (and their aggregation into Flagship Projects and entire CRPs) will make towards reaching

Intermediate Development Objectives (IDOs) and System-Level Objectives (SLOs) (CGIAR Consortium Office, 2013a, p. 29):

“[...] the heart of each CRP performance contract will be the 3-year progress indicators agreed in the approved proposal to demonstrate progress towards the 9-12 year CRP IDOs for each flagship project. These progress indicators, and their associated monetary value, will be captured in a Performance Indicator Matrix that is part and parcel of each performance contract.”

Based on this information, it seems the allocation of Window 1 and 2 resources between and within CRPs will then be determined.

While the concrete set up of this system is under continued deliberation, the Evaluation Team is worried about the apparent lack of realism in these plans:

- first, the apparently assumed attributability of research activities to development outcomes such as increased income, productivity, consumption of nutritious foods and decrease in natural degradation contradicts current textbook knowledge in the evaluation sciences;
- second, the apparently assumed monitorability of development outcome indicators is unrealistic. While each of the currently deliberated indicators can certainly be estimated with appropriate methodology, the capacities required for conducting these evaluative activities on, for example, an annual basis for all countries, target groups and target subjects of FTA (or the CGIAR) likely exceeds available capacities and resources by far;
- third, the sometimes decades-long time-lags between research activities and their intended development outcomes conflict with keeping results-based management relevant. While this information is very important for learning and planning, resource allocation decisions and management feedback cannot be based on decade-old performance, and current performance cannot be determined by uncertain models extrapolating outcomes into the far future; and
- fourth, the mechanical, quantitative comparison of value-for-money at the level of development outcomes appears beyond the reach of current methodology (Palenberg, 2011, p. 103). On this level, likely approaches for rational decision-making derived from utility theory or simpler expert scoring models are most promising, all of which include a great deal of expert judgment and donor preferences in addition to hard data.

While several of these issues are acknowledged in the SRF Management Update, no solutions were discernible in the review of that document by the Evaluation Team.

For FTA, the Evaluation Team recommended (recommendation 4) to pragmatically focus monitoring on easy-to-track early outcome targets and indicators that lie at the limits of the sphere of influence of the program's activities. This is in line with the original definition of IDOs that requires attributability<sup>80</sup>. However, most IDOs discussed today lie far beyond FTA's spheres of influence. As outlined in Section 4.4 and synthesized in recommendation 4, FTA's theory of change should clearly differentiate between impact pathways linking the program's activities to these early outcomes and those that connect those early outcomes to development outcomes. While the former is subject to monitoring on the basis of a qualitative and quantitative, attributable results framework, the latter serves as strategic guidance and is subject to verification of key assumptions (impact hypotheses) by *ex-ante* and *ex-post* impact evaluation, contribution analysis, expert advice, and other methods.

Prioritization across FTA components should be based on methods for rational decision-making – e.g. derived from utility theory or simpler scoring models – that integrate available results from rigorous assessments and reviews with expert knowledge and judgment and follow a clear set of reference criteria, for example the likelihood for impact, the international public goods character of results, and the absence of alternative sources of supply.

Based on currently available methodology, it is unrealistic that actual contributions FTA research make to IDOs – as currently defined – can be monitored and aggregated quantitatively to yield FTA or CGIAR-level outcome measures. If forced, program staff is likely to creatively produce and report figures that will however be based on such uncertain critical assumptions that they are unlikely to reflect reality.

Overall, the Evaluation Team is worried about the negative impact current unrealistic plans for performance-based resource allocation and results measurement at the IDO level entertained by the Consortium Board and Office will have on FTA if deployed without significant adjustments.

The Evaluation Team encourages the MEIA Team to proactively apply its considerable know-how to negotiating and establishing a realistic system for FTA priority setting within the CGIAR's evolving overall results-based framework.

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<sup>80</sup> Independent Science and Partnership Council, 2012, p. 3.

## 7.3.2. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Impact Assessment in FTA

The work of the team on Monitoring, Evaluation, and Impact Assessment (MEIA Team) in FTA is closely connected to the above, and is therefore discussed here. However, the overall responsibilities of the MEIA Team extend also beyond this scope.

The MEIA Team has been continuously working towards an FTA-wide coherent system for monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment. As described in Section 3.1 of this report, the FTA Proposal itself lays out a conceptually sound and logically coherent set of impact pathways, with rich description of how impact is to be achieved. A comprehensive MEIA strategy has been developed to guide this work (CIFOR, 2013c).

The MEIA Team, after establishing itself and developing its strategy, has developed a set of detailed results frameworks that have been summarized in Section 3.1 and further assessed throughout Chapter 4. In 2012 and 2013, the team organized a series of meetings and workshops with scientific program staff, during which FTA's component-level impact pathways were re-developed and updated in a participatory manner. In the same workshops, outcome-mapping exercises, including the identification and, in some cases, participation of boundary partners, were held. Further, similar workshops are planned for 2014. Since then, the MEIA Team has continued to further develop a set of generic FTA program-level impact pathway diagrams and, in parallel, component-level impact pathways.

The Evaluation Team finds that the MEIA Team succeeded in reinforcing and accelerating an already present culture shift away from focusing primarily on scientific publications towards research motivated by generating tangible development outcomes. This is considered an important achievement, and may have driven an increased attention paid to baselines and evaluation in research proposals prepared during compared to before FTA, as observed by the Evaluation Team.

The MEIA Team has also established the basis for a further development of the present results framework and program and component-level sets of nested impact pathways into an overall theory of change, as recommended in this report. This can then, in turn, serve as a basis for active research portfolio management and strategic allocation of Window 1 and 2 resources as also recommended in this report. The MEIA Team will be of critical importance for implementing these central recommendations and to ensure that critical elements of a further developed FTA theory of change are in place as, for example:

- definition of a series of relevant yet easy-to-monitor early outcome targets;
- further development of the current results framework to incorporate these early outcome targets;
- development and operation of a monitoring system on the output and early outcome level;

- further development of the current set of impact pathways into a theory of change that embeds FTA into the larger context of key actors and their activities, and clearly defines the underlying assumptions made, avoiding large causal “jumps”;
- empirical backup and validation of the assumptions underlying FTA’s theory of change;
- seamless alignment of the overall results framework with the further developed impact pathways, removing the current disconnect between both and with FTA’s project portfolio;
- explicit mapping of cross-component linkages in the results framework and in impact pathways; and
- assistance with conducting pragmatic *ex-ante* impact assessments that can help identifying project opportunities with high potential for change beyond the project’s sphere of influence and with validating assumptions made in FTA’s theory of change.

The MEIA Team has not, as of yet, been successful in instilling a much-needed sense of realism into general plans for results-based management and, especially, for performance-based resource allocation that were discussed earlier, and which FTA will be subjected to in its second phase from 2017 onwards. It was surprising to see that pronounced skepticism about the system, as it appears to be currently envisaged, is wide-spread among evaluation professional within and external to the CGIAR but that, anyhow, related work seems to be diligently implemented by some of the very same professionals. While the MEIA strategy clearly demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the available methodologies and their possibilities and limitations, this seems does not appears to be rigorously applied in practice. For example, currently, indicators for changes on the level of deforestation rates, income, dietary diversity, and policies are being diligently developed with the full understanding that these can never be adequately monitored and attributed to FTA activities as planned in the envisaged performance-based resource allocation framework. Several interviewees used the emperor’s new clothes’ metaphor when describing this conundrum.

Therefore, FTA’s MEIA Team should take a considerably more proactive role in setting realistic expectations and in assisting and challenging the Consortium Office in developing a workable system for rational research priority-setting across and within CRPs.

Another point of concern is the absence of a clear plan for evaluations, reviews, and impact assessments. While several important impact assessments have been completed, overall MEIA activities seem too much driven by project-related accountability requirements and not by a FTA-wide strategy for learning from evaluative evidence.



## 7.4. Conclusions and Recommendations

**Governance.** A series of institutions and bodies have contributed to FTA governance. FTA's Lead Center during the first phase, CIFOR, has performed well as fiduciary and legal agent and its Board of Trustees (BOT) and its DG have shown a remarkable degree of careful attention to not leverage this role unduly. The Evaluation Team finds that this hands-off approach was appropriate. It is hard to imagine that FTA, as a partnership program with few but heavily invested participants, could be led and managed successfully by a Lead Center that dominates key governance functions such as providing strategic direction, allocating funds, and overseeing management.

The FTA SC was established following SRF guidance and provided effective and professional leadership during FTA's inception phase and the first years of operation. It has made commendable efforts towards the inclusion of new FTA Participant Institutions and the establishment of a competitive holdback fund for collaborative research.

However, an issue of particular concern to the Evaluation Team is the apparently limited ability of the SC to establish strategic priorities for research under FTA and to allocate funds accordingly across FTA Participant Institutions. Overall, the mandate of the SC should be considerably strengthened and explicitly include responsibilities for strategic priority setting and resource allocation. Going forward, a significant share of independent voice should be established in the SC to allow for efficient decision-making on issues for which other members have legitimate but vested and conflicting interests. This also allows to select specifically professionals with relevant backgrounds, and to improve gender and regional balance. At the same time, the significant commitments FTA Participant Institutions made, and are expected to make, regarding work funded directly by bilateral donors needs to be recognized and reflected in continued participation of those institutions in the SC.

The Consortium Board and Office, and all Boards of FTA Participant Institutions also play important roles in FTA governance. However, there is no comprehensive and shared understanding of how all key governance functions are divided among these bodies. In addition, there seems to be an unnecessarily formal and distant modus operandi between the Consortium Office on the one side and the SC and the FTA Participant Institutions on the other side, which effectively reduces governance efficiency.

**Recommendation 10. The Evaluation Team recommends strengthening and clarifying the mandate and the independent voice of the FTA Steering Committee, and to connect it better to the Consortium Board and Office.**

**This recommendation is addressed to:**

- The FTA Steering Committee, the FTA Lead Center BOT, FTA Participating Institutions' governing bodies, and the Consortium Board and its office.

## Key points (“must have’s”):

- The Terms of Reference of the FTA Steering Committee are revised and adopted by the SC and the Lead Center BOT and then endorsed by the Consortium Board and the governing bodies of other FTA Participant Institutions. They reflect, among other:
  - The SC’s responsibilities in setting programmatic research priorities and strategically allocating Window 1 and 2 funds in the best interest of the program while taking the current funding situation of a large share of bilateral funding explicitly into account.
  - Legitimate institutional interests of FTA Participant Institutions and how these are managed and balanced *vis-à-vis* programmatic goals.
  - Separately describe FTA-related governance functions of the SC, the Lead Center BOT, other FTA Participant Institutions’ governing bodies, and the Consortium Board and Office, and ensure that, taken together, all standard program governance functions are covered without gaps and with a minimum of duplication.
- Four individuals are added to the FTA Steering Committee: three without any affiliation to the Consortium or FTA Participant Institutions (to strengthen independent expert voice) and one as authorized representative of the Consortium Office (to increase decision-making efficiency and alignment between FTA Participant Institutions and the Consortium Office). The SC Chair should be elected from among the three independent members that serve in their personal capacity.

The motivation for adding a Consortium Office representative to the SC is explained by governance efficiency arguments. If, because of current capacity constraints in the Consortium Office, no Consortium Office staff member can be made available, the Consortium Office should appoint a further independent professional to the SC, with strong background in program management, with the explicit duty of liaising between the Consortium Board, Office, and the SC.

While strengthening the independence of the SC is important, the role of FTA Participant Institutions cannot be reduced to that of implementers that receive their marching orders from one central governing body in which they have no say. Currently, most of FTA’s portfolio consists of projects voluntarily mapped to FTA by Centers. If programmatic direction-setting is to translate into the bilateral part of FTA portfolio as well, for example through increased selectivity and visible integration of bilateral grants with FTA, FTA Participant Institutions need a continued strong voice in FTA strategic priority setting. The SC should therefore maintain the current policy of having up to 8 members representing FTA Participant Institutions.

For reasons of fairness and legitimacy, adherence of SC members representing FTA Participant Institutions to minimum membership criteria should be regularly validated, and a suitable rotation scheme for independent members should be introduced.

**Strengthening FTA management.** The FTA Director and the FTA leadership group have shown strong commitment and worked hard to make FTA a success. Overall, however, the Director's mandate is too weak and the FTA leadership group duties' are insufficiently integrated into their home Center job descriptions. This stands in the way of translating a strengthened future mandate of the FTA Steering Committee into results on the ground.

**Recommendation 11. The Evaluation Team recommends that the Director's mandate and independence, and FTA's overall line management reporting be strengthened.**

**This recommendation is addressed to:**

- The FTA Steering Committee, the FTA Lead Center BOT, FTA Participating Institutions and their governing bodies.

**Key points ("must have's"):**

- The FTA Director's mandate and Terms of Reference are revised and adopted by the FTA SC and the Lead Center BOT and include:
  - Approval authority for mapping bilaterally funded projects to FTA;
  - Increased budgetary authority for Window 1 and 2 FTA funds;
  - Direct reporting to the Steering Committee;
  - The Director's FTA-related performance appraisal should be based on input from the SC, synthesized by the SC Chair, that is then embedded in the Director's home Center's HR processes.
- FTA's vertical chain of command is strengthened by integrating FTA-related ToRs for Coordinators into the job descriptions managed by FTA Participant Institutions and by ensuring the FTA Director's input into annual performance assessment with adequate weight as well as by establishing suitable upward feedback processes.

**Performance-based resource allocation on the level of the CGIAR.** On the level of the CGIAR system, the Consortium Board and Office have driven the development of a system for performance-based resource allocation that is intended to be applied to FTA for its second phase starting in 2017. The Evaluation Team is concerned about the lack of realism in those plans, and finds that key issues remain unresolved such as i) difficulties of attributing research activities to development outcomes, ii) the available resources, time and methodology for monitoring results, iii) the lack of reliable methodology to compare the value for money across very different types of results, and iv) the considerable time-lags between activities and results. Without fundamental adjustments, it seems unlikely that a workable and useful resource allocation system will be in place by 2017. For example, the idea of mechanically and quantitatively monitoring and comparing value for money of

research contributions to development outcomes contradicts current knowledge in the fields of aid efficiency and value for money, and rational decision-making. In this context, it is unrealistic to attempt to aggregate up contributions of FTA research from projects to the whole program on the level of the current set of IDOs. These concerns are addressed in the last recommendation of this report (recommendation 12) in the next chapter.

The considerable expertise of FTA's Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Assessment (MEIA) Team should be leveraged more than in the past for this work and for aligning the ensuing system and FTA's own results framework with each other.

## 8. Added Value of FTA and the Way Forward

This final chapter has two sections. The first assesses the added value FTA has generated to date. The second section assesses what progress has been made with FTA towards achieving original intentions associated with CRPs and assesses how remaining gaps can be closed based on the conclusions and recommendations made in this report.

### 8.1. Added Value of FTA

Most of what has been described and analyzed in the previous chapters of this report is a mix of what has happened explicitly because FTA was established as a program, and of what would have happened in any case. This section aims to distill which observed changes can reasonably be attributed to FTA.

In interviews, a frequent comment was that FTA, in the context of the overall CGIAR reform, led to significantly increased absolute levels of funding. While funding to the CGIAR has certainly increased and it does seem likely that the reform played a part in this, the analysis and attribution of the underlying drivers was beyond this evaluation's scope. On the contrary, this section uses a situation with comparable levels of bilateral and Window 1 and 2 funding to Centers, but without the program itself, as a conceptual counterfactual.

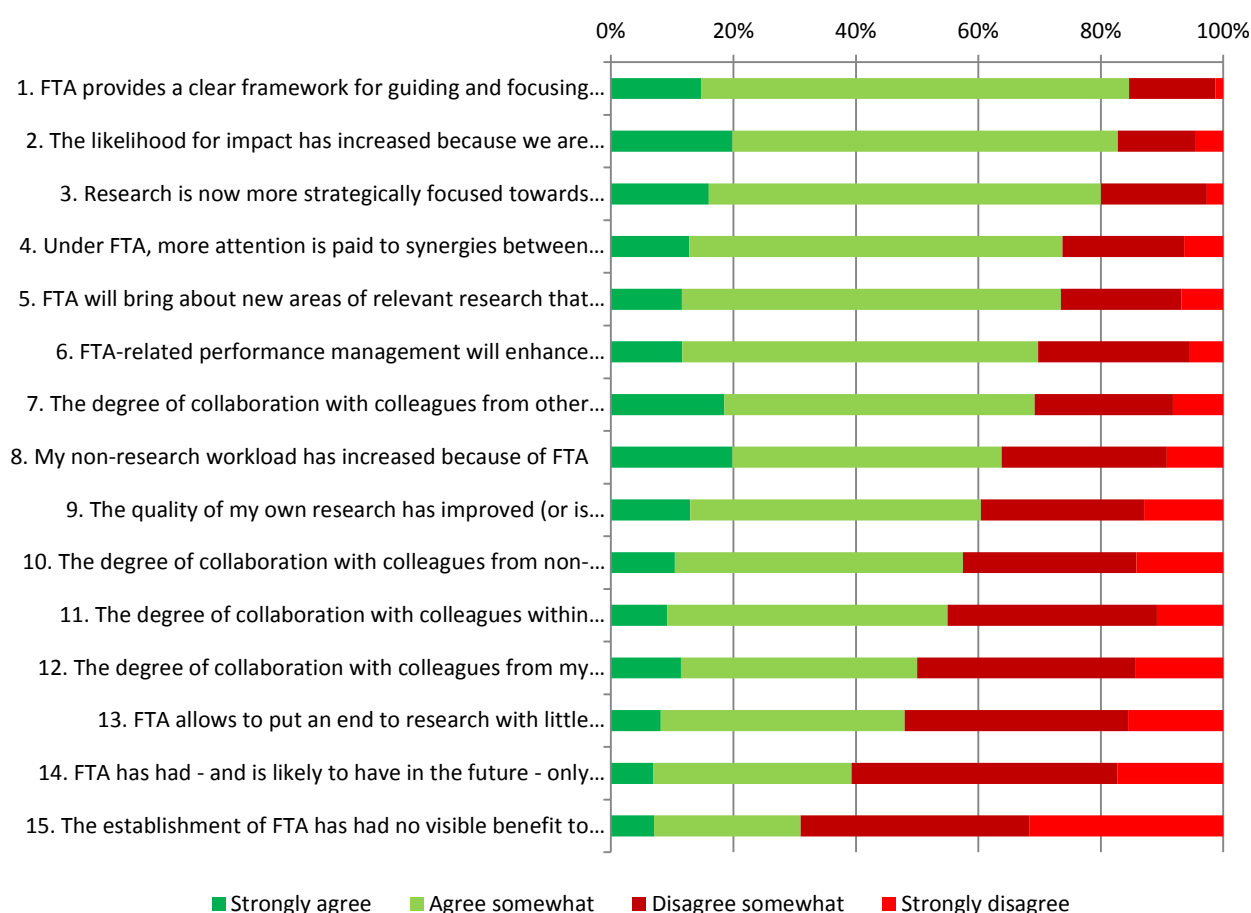
Surveyed FTA researchers, presented with a series of (sometimes purposely provocative) statements extracted from earlier interviews, perceived several important achievements and benefits they attributed to FTA (Figure 8):

- FTA provides a clear framework for guiding and focusing future research planning (point 1 in Figure 8);
- under FTA, research is more focused towards development outcomes, increasing the likelihood for impact (2, 3);
- value for money is likely to be increased through FTA, both by paying more attention to synergies between the comparative advantages of FTA Participant Institutions and through FTA-related performance management (4, 6); and
- new research areas will be covered because of FTA (5) and FTA will influence research (14).

For various effects on collaboration between researchers that were tested, positive to neutral answers were received. Apparently, FTA is perceived to have been most beneficial in fostering closer CGIAR-internal collaboration between researchers from different Centers (point 7 in Figure 8) but is less conclusive regarding present or future collaboration with non-CGIAR institutions (10, 11) or within their own home institution (12). Similar, feedback on increased research quality under FTA is slightly positive (9).

On the side of disadvantages, FTA appears to have increased non-research related workload for most (8).

**Figure 8. Feedback of FTA researchers on statements describing benefits and costs associated with FTA.<sup>81</sup>**



<sup>81</sup> N=129 to 156, depending on question, not counting “don’t know” answers. Questions have been re-ordered and numbered relative to the questionnaire. The question text was “Please let us know your level of agreement with the following statements regarding benefits and costs associated with conducting research under FTA, compared to the situation before FTA was created. (Some of these statements are purposely provocative to trigger clear responses from you and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Evaluation Team).”

Importantly, FTA researchers felt that FTA had created an overall positive net benefit, i.e. that overall benefits to research for development outweighed additional transaction and opportunity costs: about 55 percent agreed to that statement while only about 10 percent disagreed. A large share of about 35 percent remained unsure<sup>82</sup>.

In the Evaluation Team's own assessment, FTA has induced several important positive changes:

- several cross-cutting activities were introduced with important achievements as described in Chapter 6;
- the non-CGIAR institutions CATIE and CIRAD were, after what they perceived a long time of collaboration at arm's length, now allowed into the "inner circle," at par with CGIAR Centers;
- FTA has clearly strengthened the focus on and highlighted the researchers' responsibility for achieving results beyond scientific outputs;
- FTA has led to a culture of increased collaboration, most prominently between researchers of CIFOR and ICRAF. The Evaluation Team was surprised to see somewhat modest feedback from surveyed FTA researchers on the topic of collaboration as it was highlighted in many interviews; and
- FTA may also have contributed to increase the focus of research on forest-dependent people, environmentally friendly alternative land uses, and environmental services to society.

At the same time, important disadvantages have been incurred, mostly reflected in the opportunity cost associated with several senior CGIAR staff devoting considerable time into participating in the CGIAR reform process, in setting up and operating FTA, and in satisfying FTA-related reporting and planning requirements. DGs of Centers at and before FTA inception referred that they and other senior staff had, over extended periods of time, spent substantial amounts of time, in some case up to half of their total work time, on reform- and CRP-related matters.

The Evaluation Team is hopeful that, with the right steps going forward as outlined in the next section, the benefits associated with FTA will largely outweigh the costs associated with it. To date, however, the nascent positive change brought about by FTA does, by itself, not yet seem to justify overall associated efforts.

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<sup>82</sup> The survey question was asked twice, from a personal and from a societal perspective, without significant changes in the answers provided.



A central issue of concern was a rather sorry state of affairs when it came to the degree of trust, as expressed by several FTA Center staff and BOT members, regarding perceived reliability of Window 1 and 2 programmatic funding. Interviewees also expressed serious concerns with how the overall reform process had been designed and managed in the past. The Evaluation Team was surprised by the degree of frustration that surfaced in some cases. As mentioned earlier, the Evaluation Team was also worried about a somewhat fatalistic attitude of some researchers of not voicing dissent and playing along even if in factual disagreement, for example with respect to current plans for performance-based allocation of resources or towards constructing links between FTA research and CGIAR-level objectives.

The perceived substantial lack of trust between the many FTA Center staff and the Consortium Office and Board represents a very serious issue. A trust-based relationship between FTA Centers, their partners, and the Consortium Office and Board are critically necessary ingredients for the future success of FTA.

## 8.2. Achievements Relative to the Vision for CRPs and the Way Forward

**Implementation of the FTA structure.** Regarding its structural set up, FTA has been set up largely according to available guidance, while it should be noted that the main guidance document, the Strategy and Results Framework (SRF), was only adopted shortly before FTA's program start in July 2011. After the FTA Proposal had been approved and a Lead Center was selected, a Steering Committee was set up along the guidance provided at that time (CGIAR, 2011b) but no advisory committee was established (see Section 7.1). FTA then developed and adopted work plans and the Lead Center was contracted by the Consortium and issued downstream contracts to FTA Participant Institutions as requested. Over time, FTA appears to have fulfilled all reporting requirements *vis-à-vis* the Consortium Board and Office.

**Defining and implementing the FTA work program.** As described in Section 7.3, research within CRPs is intended to be derived from intended development outcomes. Instead, as outlined in Section 3.1, current linkages between FTA activities and the Intermediate Development Outcomes (IDOs) and System-Level Outcomes (SLOs) of the CGIAR are constructed bottom-up. The SRF recognizes that there is such a general discrepancy (CGIAR, 2011b, p. 88):

“The current portfolio of CRPs has been predominantly constructed starting from research outputs and research outcomes rather than from clearly identified development outcomes as proposed in this SRF.”

The SRF attributes this difference between reality and intention to the fact that the initial portfolio of CRPs had been formulated before the SRF itself was approved.

The Evaluation Team finds that there is a substantial gap between CRP-related intentions described above and the current functionalities of FTA. To close this gap, the Evaluation Team has recommended further developing present results frameworks and impact pathways, to set concrete targets, and to use the extended framework for actively driving and managing FTA's future research portfolio, as described in Chapter 4. Strengthened institutional effectiveness (Chapter 6) and governance and management arrangements (Chapter 7) provide the needed underlying functionalities.

These measures have the potential to close much of the observed gap. However, as long as a large share of FTA's project portfolio remains driven by bilateral donors, natural limitations exist to the extent to which FTA, as a program, can freely shape this part of its project portfolio according to its results framework. If expectations for higher Window 1 and 2 funding shares for FTA materialize or bilateral donors otherwise ensure close integration of bilaterally funded projects with FTA's results framework, FTA research portfolio management with respect to FTA objectives can become more forceful and directive. If, on the other hand, bilateral funding shares remain dominant and no integration occurs, the degree of authority FTA can exert – as a program – over bilaterally funded research will remain very limited. In the latter case, it will only be possible to apply greater selectivity in mapping projects to FTA and to attempt to influence the objectives of bilaterally funded research and the FTA Participant Institutions' strategies and priorities to the degree possible.

Reflecting on these considerations, the Evaluation Team recommends not establishing any fixed bilateral shares in the Phase II FTA Proposal, but rather establishing performance contracts around a set of relevant, easy-to-monitor near-outcome targets.

**Results-based management.** Currently, as reviewed in Chapters 2 through 4, there is no mechanism for results-based management for FTA in place. There is no central FTA framework or authority for scientific priority-setting across Center borders, Window 1 and 2 program funds are divided among Centers largely by propagating historic shares and bilateral projects are mapped to – but not driven by – FTA. Somewhat ironically, years after the CGIAR reform was started with results-based management as its center focus, there is less performance-based allocation of resources today than before the reform.

This gap needs to be closed from two sides. On the side of FTA, the Evaluation Team has issued several recommendations that should enable the FTA Steering Committee to allocate Window 1 and 2 program funds strategically. Once a comprehensive theory of change is in place, FTA can manage its research portfolio with a strong results-orientation. Research can be oriented and focused – across projects, components and participating institutions, on

those early outcomes that appear most likely to make significant contributions to intended development outcomes.

On the side of the Consortium Board and Office, plans for results-based management and performance-based allocation of resources need to be rendered more realistic with respect to the attributability, monitorability, and comparability of results and the considerable time-lags between activity and outcome. This is likely to ultimately result in a system similar to the one recommended in this report for FTA (recommendation 3). This would then essentially harmonize FTA's own approach for results-based management with that of the Consortium Board and Office.

**The Way Forward.** Going forward, FTA is in need of a period of stable operations during which confidence in the value-add of the CGIAR reform and the reliability and functionality of the reformed system can be build, and the recommendations of this report can be implemented. To the Evaluation Team it has become evident that – especially in the current funding situation – the realization of a results-driven programmatic approach for FTA critically hinges on cooperation and collaboration between the Consortium Board and Office on the one hand, and FTA Participant Institutions on the other. Hence, it was surprising to see that the relationship between the Consortium Office and FTA Participant Institutions has characteristics of a donor-recipient relationship rather than that of partners. A step change of direction and gears towards better and more collaboration is required, without which success in establishing any of the key requirements listed in recommendation 12 seems unlikely.

**Recommendation 12. The Evaluation Team recommends that the Fund Council, the Consortium Board and Office, the FTA Lead Center and FTA Participating Institutions work together to ensure a multi-year period of stable operations during which confidence and trust is built, the recommendations of this report are implemented, and important requirements for FTA's future success are put in place.**

**This recommendation is addressed to:**

- The Fund Council, the Consortium Board, and their offices, the FTA Steering Committee, the FTA Lead Center and its BOT, the other FTA Participant Institutions and their governing bodies.

**Key points (“must have’s”):**

- All parties involved must jointly work towards ensuring a multi-year period of stable operations during which confidence in the value-add of the CGIAR reform and the reliability and functionality of the reformed system is build.
- During this period, the FTA Lead Center and FTA Participating Institutions must:
  - Align their institutional strategies to that of FTA and to other CRPs they are invested in;

- Increase their selectivity *vis-à-vis* bilaterally funded research mapped to FTA and
- Use their existing donor contacts to better align future bilateral work to FTA and, eventually, help to shift contributions directly to FTA as a program whenever feasible.
- During this period, the Fund Council and the Consortium Board and Office must:
  - Ensure a financial and regulative operating environment that is stable, predictable and reliable over a time-horizon of several years;
  - Acknowledge current funding realities of a primarily bilaterally driven FTA research portfolio and hence consider FTA Participant Institutions as co-investors in addition to grant recipients; and
  - Urgently ensure that a workable and realistic system for results measurement and results-oriented management is ready for deployment in time for FTA second phase preparations, i.e. during early 2016.

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